

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

Second Substitute House Bill 2627

Prepared by: Mary Jane Brell Vujovic

New Section. Sec. 1. The legislature finds that the large number of individuals involved in the juvenile justice and criminal justice systems with substance abuse challenges is of significant concern. Access to effective treatment is critical to the successful treatment of individuals in the early stages of their contact with the juvenile justice and criminal justice systems. Such access may prevent further involvement in the systems. The effective use of substance abuse treatment options can result not only in significant cost savings for the juvenile justice and criminal justice systems, but can benefit the lives of individuals who face substance abuse challenges.

Bill Summary:

The bill allows law enforcement to divert certain low level offenders (juvenile and adult) with a substance use disorder away from jail into an appropriate treatment program. Nothing prohibits the prosecutor from filing charges in these diversion cases. This is a pilot program to operate in Snohomish County only. The bill requires Snohomish County to evaluate the program including measuring any cost savings and recidivism reduction. Snohomish County is required to report results to the legislature every two years with reports due July 2015, July 2017 and July 2019. The bill became law June 12, 2014.

Status:

Snohomish County, working with law enforcement, jail personnel, Fire District Emergency Medical Services (EMS), health plans, hospitals and chemical dependency treatment providers, has seen increasing demand for chemical dependency treatment. The County has created a mental health court and the City of Everett has created a mental health diversion program. A number of individuals participating in these programs have co-occurring substance use disorders. Snohomish County has also implemented a Therapeutic Alternatives to Prosecution (TAP) program that serves individuals with substance use disorders and/or mental health disorders. This increased demand has resulted in limited community detox and treatment capacity available for law enforcement diversions from the jail. Because of this the County is working with the State and local organizations to increase detox and treatment capacity by:

- Opening a second medical detox in south Snohomish County in July 2017
- Expanding outpatient treatment slots, for persons with opiate addictions in May 2017
- Creating a new program which will offer housing and treatment for offender populations with substance use disorders, anticipated to open in the first quarter of 2018
- Holding planning meetings for expanded diversion services, anticipated to be launched the first quarter of 2018

The County will implement projects and the diversion law as increased detox and treatment capacity becomes available. The County continues to see the law as a viable and necessary tool in ensuring low level offenders get appropriate treatment, avoid jail costs, and reduce recidivism.