

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

E2SSB 5557

Title: *An act relating to residential placement and transitional living services to street youth; amending RCW 74.15.020, 9.94A.390, 26.44.030, 43.63A.650, and 74.13.031; reenacting and amending RCW 13.34.130 and 13.34.145; adding new sections to chapter 74.15 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 13.60 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28B.80 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 82.04 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 82.16 RCW; creating new sections; and providing an effective date.*

Brief Description: *Providing residential placement and transitional living services to street youth.*

Sponsors: *Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Hargrove, Long, Costa, Patterson, Kohl-Welles, Prentice, Thibaudeau, Franklin, Snyder, Bauer, Jacobsen, Winsley, Brown, Kline and Rasmussen).*

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Meeting Date: *March 25, 1999.*

Bill Analysis Prepared by: *Dave Knutson (786-7146).*

Background: Many children who live on the streets do not have families they can be reunited with. Residential placements for these children are limited. Crisis residential centers are available as short-term placements, but after five days, if the child does not return home, they may again find themselves on the street. Some older adolescents, who have been found dependent by the court, are not appropriate for a foster home placement. There is currently no service for older adolescents who require assistance in developing life skills in a safe environment prior to reaching the age of majority.

Summary of Bill: The Secretary of the Department of Social and Health Services will establish, and may contract for, HOPE centers in communities across the state. The Secretary will establish up to 75 beds in HOPE centers. The beds will be phased in at the rate of 25 beds each year beginning January 1, 2000. Street youth may be served in a HOPE center for up to 30 days. The department will also contract for placement and liaison specialists in each community served by a HOPE center. The placement and liaison specialists will conduct assessments of street youth staying in HOPE centers, facilitate the street youth's return to their family or to a licensed residential agency, provide outreach services, and arrange education assessments.

The department will also establish responsible living skills programs in communities across the state. The Secretary of the Department of Social and Health Services will establish, and may contract for, responsible living skills programs in communities across the state. The Secretary will establish up to 75 beds in responsible living skills programs. The beds will be phased in at the rate of 25 beds each year beginning January 1, 2000. These programs will be available to youth between the ages of 16 and 18 who are unable to live at home, in a licensed agency, or are currently living in an unsafe location. The department may also place children between the ages of 14 and 15 if no other placement alternative is available and the department approves the placement. Services available through these programs may include educational services, assistance and counseling related to vocational training or higher education, counseling and training in various life skills, and individual and group counseling. The definition of transitional living services will vary, depending on the availability of funds.

The Department of Social and Health Services will develop a procedure for obtaining missing children information from the Missing Children Clearinghouse and disseminating the information to placement and liaison specialists, crisis residential center staff, and HOPE center staff.

Former street youth who have been residents of a HOPE center and a transitional living service program are eligible to receive educational financial assistance to attend an institution of higher education in Washington. A tax credit is authorized equal to 50 percent of the amounts donated to the HOPE educational assistance account. The tax credit applies to business and occupation taxes and public utility taxes.

An additional aggravating circumstance is added to the exceptional sentence process for individuals who knew the victim of a crime was a youth who was not residing with a legal custodian, was particularly vulnerable to a relationship with the defendant, and the defendant established the relationship primarily to victimize the youth.

The responsibility to serve homeless children and their families is clarified for the Department of Social and Health Services and the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 23, 1999.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.