

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## ESSB 5872

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Children & Family Services

**Title:** An act relating to creating the joint task force on the administration and delivery of services to children and families.

**Brief Description:** Creating a task force on the administrative organization, structure, and delivery of services to children and families.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Stevens, Carrell, Mulliken, Deccio, Finkbeiner, Delvin, Benson, Johnson, Oke, Hewitt and Schmidt).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Children & Family Services: 3/28/05, 3/31/05 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill**  
**(As Amended by House Committee)**

- Creates a joint task force to determine the most appropriate and effective administrative structure for delivery of social and health services to children and families.
- Requires the Washington State Institute for Public Policy to conduct a study under the direction of the joint task force.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Roberts, Vice Chair; Hinkle, Ranking Minority Member; Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Darneille, Dickerson, Dunn, Haler and Pettigrew.

**Staff:** Cynthia Forland (786-7152).

**Background:**

In the early 1970s, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) was created as an umbrella agency to bring together state human services programs so that people could get comprehensive assistance with many, often interrelated, needs and the state could realize savings through lower administrative costs.

The DSHS is made up of the following six administrations:

- The Aging and Disability Services Administration (ADSA) provides care to low-income individuals who require assistance in order to live independently in their homes and to individuals who receive care in adult family homes, boarding homes, or nursing homes. The ADSA includes the Division of Developmental Disabilities, which assists individuals with developmental disabilities and their families to obtain services and supports.
- The Children's Administration (CA) administers child welfare and licensing services, which include the investigation of child abuse and neglect complaints, child protection, family preservation, family reconciliation, foster care, group care, in-home services, independent living, and adoption services for children from 0 to 18 years of age.
- The Economic Services Administration provides assistance to individuals and families in need, which includes cash and food assistance, child support services, child care, and work-focused services designed to help people obtain, maintain, and improve employment.
- The Health and Rehabilitative Services Administration serves individuals who have physical or mental disabilities, mental illnesses, or addictions to drugs or alcohol.
- The Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration (JRA) provides juvenile offenders with rehabilitation, and offers programs to help them transition back to the community.
- The Medical Assistance Administration manages health care programs for low-income individuals, including the Medicaid program.

In 1983, the Legislature created the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) to carry out practical research, at legislative direction, on issues of importance to the state. The WSIPP conducts research activities using its own policy analysts, academic specialists from universities, and consultants.

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### **Summary of Amended Bill:**

Under the direction of the joint task force created in the bill, the WSIPP is required to conduct a study to determine the most appropriate and effective administrative structure for delivery of social and health services to the children and families of the state, including how best to ensure that an administrative structure has defined lines of responsibility for delivering services to children and families in need and the best means for the public to hold government accountable for delivery of those services.

The WSIPP is required to compare the effectiveness of: including social and health services to children and families within an umbrella agency, such as the current DSHS; establishing a separate agency for social and health services to children and families whose administrator reports directly to the Governor; or creating a children and family services cabinet reporting directly to the Governor. As part of the comparison, the WSIPP is required to examine the administrative structures used in other states to deliver social and health services to children and families.

A joint task force is created to determine the most appropriate and effective administrative structure for delivery of social and health services to the children and families of the state. The joint task force is required to direct the study conducted by the WSIPP pursuant to the bill.

Membership of the joint task force is to consist of the following:

- the Dean of the School of Social Work at the University of Washington or an academic professor from a list recommended by the Dean, jointly appointed by the Chairs of the House Children and Family Services Committee and the Senate Human Services and Corrections Committee;
- two members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, one of whom must be a member of the majority caucus and one of whom must be a member of the minority caucus, and two members of the Senate appointed by the President of the Senate, one of whom must be a member of the majority caucus and one of whom must be a member of the minority caucus;
- the Secretary of the DSHS or the Secretary's designee;
- the Director of the Office of the Family and Children's Ombudsman; and
- the following, jointly appointed by the Chairs of the House Children and Family Services Committee and the Senate Human Services and Corrections Committee:
  - an individual with previous experience as an administrator of a public agency providing services to children and families;
  - a juvenile court administrator;
  - a family superior court judge;
  - a social worker with experience in the public sector serving children and families; and
  - two representatives of community-based providers serving children and families.

The Dean of the School of Social Work at the University of Washington or the academic professor; jointly appointed by the Chairs of the House Children and Family Services Committee and the Senate Human Services and Corrections Committee, is to be the chair of the joint task force.

The WSIPP is required to make recommendations concerning which administrative structure or structures would best realize efficiencies in administration and best achieve positive outcomes for children and families, including, but not limited to, the following:

- reducing the number of children at risk for abuse or neglect and increasing the safety and well-being of children;
- increasing the ability of families to care for their own children and reducing the number of children in foster care;
- increasing placement stability and permanency for children in out-of-home care and reducing unsafe and inappropriate placements;
- delivering appropriate and timely mental health services;
- providing adequate and appropriate staff training and education;
- promoting foster parent recruitment, training, and retention;
- reducing the frequency and duration of sibling separation;
- delivering adequate and timely services to adolescents; and
- increasing responsibility and accountability for achieving goals.

The WSIPP is required to make recommendations concerning the costs, benefits, savings, or reductions in services associated with the various administrative structures considered in the study.

The WSIPP is required to report its recommendations to the joint task force created in the bill by December 1, 2005.

**Amended Bill Compared to Engrossed Substitute Bill:**

The joint task force created in the bill is required to direct, rather than itself conduct, the study required in the bill. The WSIPP is charged with conducting the study under the direction of the joint task force.

In comparing the effectiveness of administrative structures, the WSIPP is required to consider creation of a children and family services cabinet reporting directly to the Governor.

The following changes are made to the membership of the joint task force:

- The following are added to the membership: the Secretary of the DSHS, an individual with previous experience as an administrator of a public agency providing services to children and families, and two representatives of community-based providers serving children and families.
- The following are removed from the membership: an academic professor with expertise in the management of public agencies, a law enforcement officer, the Director of the Washington State Office of Public Defense, a line worker from the JRA's Division of Community Programs, a private vendor of mental health services to children and families, the Director of the CA's Office of Legislative Affairs; and a representative of the Governor's Office.
- Members of the joint task force are to be jointly appointed by the Chairs of the House Children and Family Services Committee and the Senate Human Services and Corrections Committee.

The WSIPP is required to report its recommendations to the joint task force created in the bill by December 1, 2005.

The emergency clause is removed.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Amended Bill:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Testimony For:** (In support) This bill is somewhat controversial in the fact that it is changing the status quo. Too many children in the custody of the state have died. It continues to be an ongoing problem of repeating same mistakes. The number one concern is keeping children safe. By dividing the CA away from the DSHS, it would place a greater emphasis on the

safety of children by making the administrator of that agency a cabinet-level position. It is possible that the CA is being lost in the overall big organization of the DSHS. Breaking apart a state agency is a complicated process, but we need to closer look at the advisability of dividing the CA out. It seems appropriate that the School of Social Work should take the lead in this process. Given the connections between child welfare and juvenile justice, it seems only logical to also include the JRA in these considerations. Overall, there is a lot to look at here.

(With amendments) In looking at breaking apart any section of the DSHS, it would be good to know or have a better sense of what outcomes you hope to achieve with the new configuration. You have to look at what a children's department should be, what it should include. The idea of having a task force take a look at this is the best approach. The make-up of the task force should be a bit different, including people from community-based organizations and an outside expert in child welfare.

**Testimony Against:** Increasing the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families in the state is a shared goal. Increasing accountability, particularly to the public, is also a shared goal. The DSHS anticipates many changes in the future, particularly in children's services. The bill should be held off while the DSHS undertakes changes.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Senator Stevens, prime sponsor.

(With amendments) Laurie Lippold, Children's Home Society.

(Opposed) Robin Arnold-Williams, Department of Social and Health Services.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.