
**Human Services, Youth, & Early
Learning Committee**

HB 2407

Brief Description: Increasing protections for child welfare workers.

Sponsors: Representatives Couture, Rule, Senn, Caldier and Jacobsen.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Provides that a child welfare worker responding to a private location to provide services to, monitor, or investigate a family, may request to be accompanied by a trained second person when the worker has concerns that violence could occur, and requires DCYF to arrange for such accompaniment whenever possible.
- Requires that child welfare workers receive training related to de-escalation strategies.

Hearing Date: 1/23/24

Staff: Omeara Harrington (786-7136).

Background:

Child Welfare Workers.

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) is responsible for administering services to assist families in the safe care of children and to protect children from child abuse and neglect. Child welfare workers are employees of the DCYF who support or provide child protective services or child welfare services.

The DCYF Child Protective Services (CPS) office conducts investigations of reported child

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abuse and neglect. If the CPS determines that a report is credible and meets screening criteria, it will assign either a 24-hour investigation response or 72-hour family assessment response, depending on the severity of the allegation. Services through the CPS may include, among other things, referral to services to ameliorate conditions that endanger the welfare of children, and coordination of necessary programs and services relevant to the prevention, intervention, and treatment of child abuse and neglect. Additionally, anyone, including the CPS, may file a petition in court alleging that a child should be a dependent of the state due to abuse, neglect, or because there is no parent, guardian, or custodian capable of adequately caring for the child.

Child welfare services are social services, including voluntary and in-home services, out-of-home care, case management, and adoption services, that strengthen, supplement, or substitute for, parental care and supervision. Child welfare services may be for the purpose of:

- preventing or remedying problems which may result in families in conflict, or the neglect, abuse, exploitation, or criminal behavior of children;
- protecting and caring for dependent, abused, or neglected children;
- assisting parents and children who are in conflict with each other with services designed to resolve those conflicts;
- protecting and promoting the welfare of children, including the strengthening of their homes; or
- providing adequate care of children away from their homes in foster family homes or other placements.

Child Welfare Worker Training.

Child welfare workers must meet minimum training standards as established by the DCYF before they are assigned to case-carrying responsibilities as a sole worker. Newly hired child welfare workers must undergo an eight-week core training and additional in-service trainings specific to their program area. The Alliance for Professional Development, Training, and Caregiver Excellence, a collaboration between the University of Washington, the University of Washington Tacoma, and Eastern Washington University, provides the core training and ongoing training for child welfare workers. The DCYF is also required to provide specialized training to child welfare workers who are responsible for investigating child sexual abuse and conducting interviews of children, as well as ongoing training and consultation on handling cases that involve domestic violence.

Summary of Bill:

A child welfare worker who is required to respond to a private home or other private location to provide services to, monitor, or investigate a family, may make a request to their supervisor to be accompanied by a second trained individual when the child welfare worker has concerns that violence could occur based on a family member's history of violence. When a request is made, the DSHS must provide a second trained individual to accompany the child welfare worker unless it is not possible to fulfill the request under the circumstances. The second trained individual may be a law enforcement officer, a mental health professional, or another first responder, such as a firefighter or emergency medical personnel, or an employee of the DCYF

who is trained as a child welfare worker and acts in a supervisory capacity with respect to other child welfare workers.

Minimum training standards for child welfare workers must include training related to de-escalation strategies. The DCYF must also offer optional in-service training on de-escalation strategies on at least an annual basis to all child welfare workers.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 17, 2024.

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