
SENATE BILL 5829

State of Washington

61st Legislature

2009 Regular Session

By Senators Kastama, Shin, Hargrove, Stevens, Jacobsen, Swecker, Kilmer, Holmquist, Carrell, Roach, and Regala

Read first time 02/03/09. Referred to Committee on Human Services & Corrections.

1 AN ACT Relating to a pilot program for family counseling; and
2 creating new sections.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The secretary of the department of
5 health shall establish a pilot program to provide merit checks of no
6 more than one hundred dollars to no more than four hundred fifty
7 couples who complete a family preparation course. The department of
8 health must ensure that the administrative cost of the program does not
9 exceed five percent of the total allocation. The pilot program must
10 begin no later than January 1, 2012, and continue for no more than five
11 years, in a county with a population between seven hundred twenty
12 thousand and one million. Under the pilot program, a couple who intend
13 to apply for a marriage license may, together or separately, complete
14 a family preparation course of not less than four hours with a family
15 preparation course provider. The county auditor shall provide to
16 couples interested in applying for a marriage license in the county, or
17 to a qualified instructor, certificate of completion forms for the
18 family preparation course and information that includes a brief
19 explanation of the course of required instruction, the required length

1 of time of the course, and an explanation of the qualified instructor
2 requirements. Within ninety days of applying for a marriage license,
3 either applicant may verify completion of a family preparation course
4 by filing with the department of health a copy of the marriage
5 certificate and a valid certificate of completion from a registered
6 course provider. Completed forms must include names and addresses of
7 participants, the name and work address of the course provider,
8 signatures of participants attesting to the completion of the required
9 coursework and the required length of instruction, and the signature of
10 the qualified instructor attesting to being a qualified instructor and
11 providing the required coursework and time requirement for the
12 participants.

13 (2) For the purposes of this section, a family preparation course
14 must include instruction regarding:

- 15 (a) Conflict management;
- 16 (b) Communication skills;
- 17 (c) Financial responsibilities in a marriage; and
- 18 (d) Children and parenting responsibilities.

19 (3) The family preparation course must be at least four hours in
20 length and must be taken from a qualified instructor who is a:

- 21 (a) Licensed psychologist;
- 22 (b) Certified social worker;
- 23 (c) Certified marriage and family therapist;
- 24 (d) Certified mental health counselor;
- 25 (e) Registered counselor with relevant training or coursework;
- 26 (f) Provider designated by a family court judge or commissioner; or
- 27 (g) Official representative of a religious institution, if the
28 representative has relevant training in conflict management,
29 communication skills, financial responsibilities in marriage, and
30 children and parenting responsibilities.

31 (4) Any costs of the family preparation course must be paid by the
32 applicant.

33 (5) When the department of health receives a copy of a marriage
34 certificate and a certificate of completion of a family preparation
35 course issued by a qualified instructor consistent with this section,
36 the department shall, within sixty days, issue a merit check to the
37 couple, not to exceed one hundred dollars per married couple.

1 (6) The department of health's statistics center shall compile
2 information on divorced or annulled couples who had previously
3 participated in a family preparation course.

4 (7) The department of health shall notify county auditors if there
5 are no available funds for this pilot program.

6 (8) The department of health shall report to the appropriate
7 committees of the legislature five years after the completion of the
8 pilot program. The committees shall make recommendations on whether
9 the program should be initiated statewide based on the results of the
10 number of participants who are still married as opposed to the average
11 divorce rate.

12 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** All costs associated with the family
13 preparation course, including clerical functions performed by the
14 county auditor, must be privately funded. The funding must be found
15 and the pilot program must begin within two years of the effective date
16 of this section, with a minimum of four hundred fifty couples, not to
17 exceed one thousand couples.

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