

SUBJECT: DPRS pilot project for children with behavioral problems in child care

COMMITTEE: Human Services — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 6 ayes — Naishtat, Chavez, J. Davis, Noriega, Villarreal, Wohlgemuth
0 nays
3 absent — Ehrhardt, Raymond, Telford

WITNESSES: For — Bob Ambrosino, Family Forward; Mary Ann Maland, Red Bear Project Collaboration; *Registered but did not testify*: Susan Craven, Texans Care for Children; Kay Lambert, Advocacy, Inc.; Denise Brandy, Early Childhood Intervention

Against — None

On — *Registered but did not testify*: Thomas Chapmond, Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services

DIGEST: CSHB 2543 would require the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (DPRS) to develop and implement a pilot program to award grants to or contracts with community-based organizations to provide child-care intervention services to parents of children age 18 months to five years old with severe behavioral problems in child-care environments and to child-care facilities who care for these children. The requirement would be subject to available funding.

Organizations awarded grants would have to contract with child-care facilities to provide care for these children and ensure that the organization had procedures to refer each child suspected of having a disability to an appropriate early childhood intervention or special education program.

Child-care intervention services would include integrated family services for the parents of these children and specialized training in behavioral intervention techniques for child-care facilities. Family services would require parental participation and parenting skills training and would include

training in positive parenting and behavioral intervention techniques designed to minimize child-care disruptions and loss of child-care options.

By December 1, 2002, DPRS would be required to submit a report to the Legislature about the effectiveness of the pilot program. The requirement for the pilot program would expire September 1, 2003. CSHB 2543 would take effect September 1, 2001.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 2543 could help prevent some children from developing chronic delinquency problems as they grew older by funding programs to work with children in child-care facilities and with their parents to address severe behavioral problems.

Some young children in child care facilities who are not yet school-age exhibit a tendency to be severely violent or have behavioral problems that can be indicators of future delinquency. Sometimes these children are barred from returning to the child care facility, leaving parents unable to work or forcing them into child care arrangements that are less than desirable.

CSHB 2543 would allow DPRS to contract with community groups to train child-care workers to identify and work with these children and their parents to address their children's problems. This could allow the children to stay in the child care facilities and could prevent escalation of their problems. Many delinquency prevention programs do not begin until a child has entered the juvenile justice system, and studies show that early intervention can curb future problems.

CSHB 2543 would ensure a holistic approach to helping children by requiring that both parents and child care facilities participate in the program. The bill would authorize only a pilot program so that the results could be studied before being widely implemented. Funding a program in child-care facilities would not be inappropriate for DPRS since its 17 prevention programs vary widely and address many different levels of delinquency prevention.

CSHB 2543 would ensure that children with disabilities would be handled appropriately by requiring that they be referred to intervention or special education programs.

No current prevention programs would suffer because DPRS only would be required to implement the program if funds were available. While the fiscal note estimates a program cost of \$271,000 for the biennium, Art. 11, the “wish list” of the House-passed version of SB 1, the fiscal 2002-03 general appropriations bill, would appropriate \$500,000 per year to DPRS for the project.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

It could be inappropriate for DPRS to become involved in behavioral issues with very young children in child-care facilities since DPRS’ programs generally deal with children who are older.

CSHB 2543 would apply to children identified with “severe behavioral problems,” a vague term which could be misapplied, especially when dealing with very young children.

NOTES:

The committee substitute added to the original bill the requirement that organizations awarded grants under the bill had procedures to refer children suspected of having disabilities to intervention or special education programs.