

- SUBJECT:** Promoting the involvement of fathers with their children before birth
- COMMITTEE:** Human Services — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 9 ayes — Rose, Herrero, Darby, Elkins, Hernandez, Hughes, Legler, Naishtat, Walle
- 0 nays
- WITNESSES:** For — Jennifer Margulies, Texas Council on Family Violence; Judy Powell, Parent Guidance Center; David Shenoda; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Celia Hagert, Center for Public Policy Priorities; Jennifer Allmon, Texas Catholic Conference, Roman Catholic Bishops; Noelita Lugo, Texans Care for Children; Diana Martinez, TexProtects, The Association for the Protection of Children; Lesley Ramsey)
- Against — Bertha Amaya and Linda Buck, Texas Association of Local WIC Directors (TALWD); (*Registered, but did not testify*: Loretta Grisham; Judith Harden, Merry Jo Hopkins, Margaret Payton, Donna Sundstrom, and Monica Wysong, Texas Association of Local WIC Directors; Sandra Hill; Barbara Khaleeq; Angela Quillin)
- On — Michael Hayes, Attorney General's Office, Child Support Division
- BACKGROUND:** Pregnancy is a time of high risk for domestic violence. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that every year over 300,000 pregnant women experience some form of violence. The Journal of the American Medical Association (AMA) states that violence is cited as a pregnancy complication more often than gestational diabetes, hypertension, or other serious and well-known complications of pregnancy. Furthermore, statistics show that the leading cause of death among pregnant women is homicide. Domestic violence during pregnancy is also linked to increased risk of miscarriage, low birth weight, fetal injury, and fetal death.
- A report by the Texas Attorney General's Office entitled "The First Nine Months of Fatherhood" cites extensive research and numerous findings indicating that involvement and support of the male partner, or father, during pregnancy has positive impacts.

DIGEST:

CSHB 2659 would amend Health and Safety Code, ch. 32 by adding sec. 32.0211 creating the Women, Infants, and Children Program Outreach Campaign to Promote Fathers' Involvement. The bill would require the attorney general to develop a publication describing the effects on children of a father's involvement during a mother's pregnancy. The publication would also provide guidance to prospective fathers regarding the steps they could take during pregnancy and the effects those actions would have on pregnancy outcomes, as well as information regarding:

- the importance of prenatal health care visits by the mother;
- the child's prenatal health and developmental stages of the child;
- how a father's personal risk behaviors could affect the child and a guide to resources to assist the father in making necessary lifestyle changes;
- basic infant care, including health and safety issues, and information on bonding and attachment and how each relates to an infant's development;
- healthy relationship and coparenting information, including communication and conflict resolution strategies; and
- the immediate and long-term benefits of father involvement specific to their family, and perceived barriers to father involvement and strategies for overcoming those barriers.

The Attorney General's Office would make the publication available on its website and to any agency, organization, or other entity that contracts with WIC. These WIC-related entities would provide the publication to each pregnant woman receiving clinical or nutritional services under the program and to the prospective father of her child, if possible. The WIC entities would not be required to comply with the bill unless the attorney general made the publication available.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2009.