

SUBJECT: Coordinating informal caregiver support services information

COMMITTEE: Human Services — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 6 ayes — Rose, Darby, Elkins, Hernandez, Naishtat, Walle
0 nays
3 absent — Herrero, Hughes, Legler

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, May 5 — 31-0, on Local and Uncontested Calendar

WITNESSES: (*On House companion bill, HB 3367:*)
For — Kim Suiter, National Multiple Sclerosis Society; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Amanda Fredriksen, AARP; Susan Murphree, Advocacy, Inc.)
Against — None
On — Gary Jessee, Department of Aging and Disability Services; Donna Morstad, Legislative Budget Board

BACKGROUND: The Legislative Budget Board staff, in its *Government Effectiveness and Efficiency Report* submitted to the 81st Legislature, made several recommendations to implement strategies to strengthen the current delivery of informal caregiver support services that would help sustain the informal care system. Such strategies have the potential to avoid future spending on Medicaid institutional long-term care.

According to the report, informal caregivers, usually family and friends, often do not identify themselves as caregivers and are not aware of caregiver support services in Texas, including services available through the local network of 28 area agencies on aging. Informal caregivers who seek services through the area agencies on aging may receive a comprehensive assessment that identifies the assistance they need to remain in the caregiving role. These agencies sometimes lack a consistent protocol to determine when caregivers should receive this assessment as well as a standardized caregiver assessment tool. This makes it difficult

for the state to analyze statewide data to evaluate the needs of caregivers and measure the effectiveness of support interventions and how to improve existing programs.

DIGEST:

SB 1766 would require the Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) to coordinate with area agencies on aging, and to the extent considered feasible by DADS, could coordinate with other local entities on public awareness outreach efforts on the role of informal caregivers in long-term care, including support services.

To assist a local entity with outreach efforts, DADS would expand an existing website to provide a link through which a local entity could post and access best practices information about informal caregiving support. DADS also would create a document template that entities could adapt and use to publish available resources.

DADS would be required to include a form in the functional eligibility determination process for Medicaid long-term care programs for older people to identify informal caregivers. The department could include a form in other long-term care support services systems, if feasible. The form would be used to identify informal caregivers and enable DADS to refer the caregivers to available support services.

DADS would be required to develop and implement a protocol, including the use of a standardized assessment tool, to evaluate the needs of certain informal caregivers.

DADS would be required to analyze data collected from both the caregiver form included in the functional eligibility determination process and the standardized assessment tool. A report on the data would be submitted to the governor and the LBB by December 1 of each even-numbered year, with the initial report due by December 1, 2012.

If a state agency determined that a waiver or authorization from a federal agency was necessary, the agency would be required to request the waiver or authorization and could delay implementation until the waiver or authorization was granted.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2009.

NOTES:

The House companion bill, HB 3367 by Rose, was reported favorably, as substituted, by the Human Services Committee and placed on the May 14 General State Calendar, but no further action was taken.