

SUBJECT: Strategic planning for child abuse and neglect prevention and intervention

COMMITTEE: Human Services — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 7 ayes — Rose, S. King, J. Davis, Eissler, Hughes, Naishtat, Pierson

0 nays

2 absent — Herrero, Parker

WITNESSES: For — Marianne Ehrlich, Healthy Family Initiatives; Amanda Van Hoozer, Center for Child Protection, Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Conni Barker, DePelchin Children's Center; John Castle, Texas Association for Protection of Children; Melody Chatelle, United Way Capital Area; Madeline McClure, TexProtects, The Texas Association for the Protection of Children; Carol Miller, National Association of Social Workers, Texas Chapter; Michelle Romero, Texas Medical Association; Jason Sabo, United Ways of Texas; Amy Tripp, Texans Care for Children)

Against — None

On — David Evans

BACKGROUND: In 2005, the 79th Legislature enacted HB 1685 by Dukes, which created the Interagency Coordinating Council for Building Healthy Families. The council was established to facilitate communication and collaboration among state agencies on child abuse and neglect prevention and early intervention policies. The council includes members from the health and human services agencies as well as members from other agencies dealing with the education and welfare of children and families.

DIGEST: HB 662 would require DFPS to consult with the Interagency Coordinating Council for Building Healthy Families to develop a statewide, long-range strategic plan for child abuse and neglect prevention services. It would include a strategy for state and local governments to reduce their need for services addressing child maltreatment and transition to a system that promoted child abuse and neglect prevention services. A goal of the plan would be to use cost savings to increase prevention services funding in the

future. The plan would also include details for child abuse and neglect public awareness efforts and outreach.

The Interagency Coordinating Council for Building Healthy Families would be required to improve coordination among state agencies whose programs and services promoted and fostered healthy families. The council also would provide information and resources to and receive input from these agencies. A representative from the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services would be added to the council.

The council would evaluate state-funded child abuse and neglect prevention and early intervention programs to determine:

- the effectiveness and cost efficiency of these programs;
- the potential for streamlined funding mechanisms;
- the potential methods by which these programs could increase reliance on evidence-based practices;
- the methods for identifying opportunities for comprehensive improvements to the delivery of services; and
- the need for increased state funding for these programs in order to ensure a sustained, long-term, cost-effective investment in families.

By December 1, 2008, the council would prepare and submit to the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the Legislature a report containing the council's recommendations for improving the coordination and collaboration of state-funded, child abuse and neglect prevention and early intervention programs and services. The report would include recommendations to implement the strategic plan and the council's findings on the effectiveness of current programs, options to improve service delivery, and the need for increased program funding. The council would submit a second report by December 1, 2009, containing the council's findings on potential funding mechanisms and methods to increase reliance on evidence-based practices.

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, 2007.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

HB 662 would implement recommendations of the December 2006 report by the Interagency Coordinating Council for Building Healthy Families to continue evaluation of state child abuse and prevention programs. The

December 2006 report indicated that child maltreatment can lead to poor child outcomes, including physical injury, low self-esteem, problems with bonding and forming relationships, developmental delays, learning disorders, depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, conduct disorders, and aggressive behavior. In fiscal 2005, child abuse and neglect cost Texas \$765.2 million in state and federal pass through funds for purchased services, foster care payments, adoption subsidy payments, staffing, and Child Protective Services. This does not include the indirect costs of dealing with the long-term societal consequences of child maltreatment such as drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, and adult criminality.

HB 662 would help Texans avoid the costly emotional and financial repercussions of child abuse and neglect by identifying evidence-based policies to address these issues. Coordinating the state's fragmented programs and services would be the best approach to achieving positive and cost-effective family outcomes. Prevention should be the focus of state services so that children are never put in harm's way. The council's strategic plan as required by HB 662 would provide a blueprint to support this philosophy with performance targets, measurable outcomes, and timeframes for program implementation. According to the fiscal note, the bill would have minimal fiscal impact.

OPPONENTS  
SAY:

No apparent opposition.