

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
81R10431 UM-F

S.B. 1646
By: Van de Putte
Health & Human Services
4/9/2009
As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The National Governor's Association has identified high-level coordination of services as a best practice for realizing optimal child outcomes and public return on investments. However, in Texas there is no single lead agency or oversight body to coordinate the work of the 10 state agencies and various local entities that provide services and funding specifically to children and youth. This lack of coordination and accountability produces significant challenges to statewide tracking of spending on children's services and increases the possibility of unnecessary duplication of efforts. It also leaves a vacuum in executive-level agency leadership to establish priorities and assess potential gaps in services to the state's children and youth.

For children and families, the lack of coordination leads to inaccessibility of services due to multiple, disconnected programs. The President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health reported that consumers often feel overwhelmed when they must access and integrate services across disconnected programs, especially for children involved in multiple public systems, such as education, juvenile justice, and mental health.

Across the country, many states have already established cross-agency coordinating bodies to fundamentally change fragmented service delivery to children and youth. These bodies vary in structure from state to state. As of May 2008, 15 states had a Children's Cabinet and nine other states had a high-level council, commission, or collaboration.

As proposed, S.B. 1646 establishes the Council on Children and Families (council) to coordinate the state's health, education, and human services systems to ensure that all children and families have access to needed services. This bill sets forth the responsibilities of the council.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 531, Government Code, by adding Subchapter T, as follows:

SUBCHAPTER T. COUNCIL ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Sec. 531.801. DEFINITION. Defines "council."

Sec. 531.802. COUNCIL ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES. (a) Establishes the Council on Children and Families (council) to coordinate the state's health, education, and human services systems to ensure that all children and families have access to needed services.

(b) Sets forth, subject to Subsection (c), the composition of the council.

(c) Authorizes an individual listed in Subsection (b) to designate another individual as having authority to act on behalf of the individual at council meetings and with respect to council functions.

(d) Requires the members of the council to annually elect one member to serve as the presiding officer.

(e) Provides that the council is administratively attached to the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) but is independent of direction by HHSC or the executive commissioner of HHSC. Requires HHSC, through HHSC's Office of Program Coordination for Children and Youth, to provide administrative support and resources to the council as necessary to enable the council to perform its duties.

(f) Requires the agencies represented on the council to provide periodic staff support of specialists as need to the council.

(g) Provides that the council is not subject to Chapter 2110 (State Agency Advisory Committees).

Sec. 531.803. DUTIES. (a) Sets forth the required duties of the council.

Sec. 531.804. REPORT BY COUNCIL ON CHILD WELFARE. Requires the council, not later than December 1, 2010, to submit a report to the governor, lieutenant governor, speaker of the house of representatives, and members of the legislature that contains the requests, plans, and recommendations of the council, including recommendations of any legislation that is needed to further develop and maintain a statewide system of quality health, education, and human services for children and families.

Sec. 531.805. SUNSET PROVISION. Provides that the council is subject to Chapter 325 (Texas Sunset Act) and unless continued in existence as provided by that chapter, the council is abolished and this subchapter expires September 1, 2015.

SECTION 2. Requires the council established by Section 531.802, Government Code, as added by this Act, to convene its initial meeting not later than October 1, 2009.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2009.