

SUBJECT: Amending provisions of the Family Code relating to child abuse

COMMITTEE: Juvenile Justice and Family Issues - committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 5 ayes — Goodman, De La Garza, Naishtat, Puente, Van de Putte
0 nays
4 absent — Cook, Brady, H. Cuellar, Williamson

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 10 — voice vote

WITNESSES: None

DIGEST: CSSB 262 would amend provisions of the Family Code relating to child abuse hearings by the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (PRS), encourage the department to adopt standards for continuing education for investigators and require the department to foster a strengthened parent-child relationship in families with abused or neglected children.

Review hearings. CSSB 262 would add new language requiring courts at the review hearing stage to consider whether returning the child to the custody and control of the child's parents would be in the *best interest* of the child.

CSSB 262 would require a court, PRS, or another authorized agency, when determining whether the child's parents are willing and able to provide the child with a safe environment, to consider whether a child would benefit by returning to the home.

Professional training. The bill would ensure that the professional training curriculum for PRS investigators was current and consistent with current research by leaders in the field relating to the prevention of abuse, neglect and treatment of children at risk of abuse. PRS would be required to annually review the training curriculum of staff investigators in areas of child abuse, indicators of a false allegations of child abuse, methods of preventing and treating child abuse and interview techniques.

PRS would be encouraged to hire, as investigators or supervisors to investigators, only persons holding bachelors degrees.

PRS would be encouraged to adopt standards for continuing education and training curriculum for investigators.

CSSB 262 would require PRS directly or through a contracted provider to provide services to an abused or neglected child and the child's family designed to prevent the removal of the child from the home and to foster, encourage and support a strengthened parent-child relationship.

This bill would take effect September 1, 1995.

NOTES:

The committee substitute included a provision which requires services to focus on strengthening the parent-child relationship. The substitute deleted from the Senate-passed version provisions establishing the youth care investigations oversight panel, and provisions relating to the manipulation of a child's statement that would become the basis of an allegation and penalties for such offenses.