

SUBJECT: Composition and functions of the child fatality review team committee

COMMITTEE: Human Services — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 8 ayes — Rose, S. King, J. Davis, Eissler, Herrero, Hughes, Naishtat,  
Parker

0 nays

1 absent — Pierson

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 3 — 30-0

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Mazie M. Jamison, Children's  
Medical Center Dallas; Carrie Kroll, Texas Pediatric Society)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Brian Castrucci, Department of  
State Health Services)

BACKGROUND: In 1995, the 74th Legislature created the child fatality review team  
committee. The purpose of the committee is to develop an understanding  
of the causes and incidence of child deaths and identify mechanisms to  
reduce the number of preventable child deaths in Texas.

The committee has a total of 18 members. Three Health and Human  
Services Commission (HHSC) representatives — from the bureau of vital  
statistics, protective services for families and children, and the bureau of  
epidemiology — appoint an additional 15 members from a number of  
disciplines, including law, law enforcement, medicine, public health,  
education, protective services, and others. These members serve two-year  
terms and must represent the regional, cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic  
diversity of Texas.

The committee issues a report for each preventable child death, including  
findings related to the child's death and recommendations on how to  
prevent similar deaths. By December 1 of each year, the committee must  
issue a compilation of these reports to the public and to the governor, the

lieutenant governor, the speaker of the House, and the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). By June 1, DFPS must submit to the committee and the state officials listed above a written response on the compilation from the previous year describing which recommendations the department will implement and the methods of implementation.

**DIGEST:**

SB 802 would amend Family Code, secs. 264.502 and 264.503 to modify the child fatality review team committee and its duties. The HHSC member representing the bureau of epidemiology would be replaced by a member representing the DSHS director of the Title V maternal and child health fee-for-service program.

To the 15 appointed members of the committee, the bill would add representatives from the Department of Public Safety (DPS) and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). These members would serve three-year terms instead of two-year terms, and a member whose term expired would be eligible for reappointment. Terms of members serving on the committee prior to the effective date of the bill would expire February 1, 2008. Otherwise, terms would be staggered so that:

- five members' terms expired February 1, 2009;
- six members' terms expired February 1, 2010; and
- six members' terms expired February 1, 2011.

SB 802 also would require that the committee publish its initial annual compilation of child fatality reports by April 1 and its written response on the compilation containing recommendations for distribution to state officials by October 1.

DFPS would be required to work cooperatively with DSHS, the committee, and individual child fatality review teams.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2007.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

SB 802 would strengthen the state's coordinated system for investigation of child fatalities. The membership of the review team committee should include representatives from state agencies involved in child safety and protection, and SB 802 would add representatives from DPS, TxDOT, and DSHS staff with specific experience in maternal and child health. The bill would improve the efficacy of this multi-disciplinary, multi-agency team to review and design solutions to avoid preventable child deaths.

OPPONENTS  
SAY:

No apparent opposition.