

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 2080
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Health & Human Services
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AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Child abuse and neglect kills more than three children every day in America. Nearly 85 percent of the child victims are under the age of six and nearly half of them are less than one year old. In Texas, a child is abused or neglected every 11 minutes and the number of children placed in foster care due to child abuse in the home increased 30 percent between 2001 and 2005. Reports of child abuse are increasing rapidly, and the child protection system lacks the capacity to provide adequate and timely investigation of so many reports.

Children who have been the victims of abuse experience problems in school and are at risk of developing certain health problems or adopting certain unhealthy behaviors. About 22 percent of victims suffer from learning disorders, which causes them to be placed in special education.

Abuse that occurs during infancy or early childhood can cause important regions of the brain to develop improperly, leading to long-term physical and mental problems. Twenty-five to 30 percent of infant victims develop shaken baby syndrome and die; those infants who do not die can develop visual, motor, or cognitive impairments. The investigation, care, placement, and treatment costs associated with child abuse in this state approach \$900 million per year.

As proposed, S.B. 2080 creates a task force to study the issue of child abuse and neglect and child welfare and requires the task force to create goals for state policy on the issue and submit a strategic plan to accomplish those goals.

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. Defines "task force."

SECTION 2. (a) Provides that the task force consists of 15 members appointed as follows:

- (1) five members appointed by the governor;
- (2) five members appointed by the lieutenant governor; and
- (3) five members appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives.

(b) Requires members of the task force to be individuals who are actively involved in the fields of the prevention of child abuse and neglect and child welfare. Requires that the appointment of members reflect the geographic diversity of the state.

(c) Prohibits a member of the task force from being appointed to, or being an employee of, a state agency.

(d) Provides that a member of the task force is not entitled to compensation for service on the task force but is entitled to reimbursement for travel expenses as provided by Chapter 660 (Travel Expenses), Government Code, and the General Appropriations Act.

(e) Requires the task force to elect a presiding officer by a majority vote of the membership of the task force.

(f) Requires the task force to meet at the call of the presiding officer.

(g) Provides that Chapter 2110 (State Agency Advisory Committees), Government Code, does not apply to the task force.

SECTION 3. (a) Requires the task force to establish a strategy for reducing child abuse and neglect and for improving child welfare in this state. Sets forth the required duties of the task force in establishing that strategy.

(b) Authorizes the strategic plan submitted under Subsection (a) of this section to include proposals for specific statutory changes, the creation of new programs, and methods to foster cooperation among state agencies and between the state and local government.

SECTION 4. (a) Requires the task force to consult with employees of the Department of Family and Protective Services, the Department of State Health Services, and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice as necessary to accomplish the task force's responsibilities under this Act.

(b) Authorizes the task force to cooperate as necessary with any other appropriate state agency.

SECTION 5. (a) Requires the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the house of representatives to appoint the members of the task force not later than October 1, 2009.

(b) Requires the task force, not later than August 1, 2011, to submit the strategic plan required by Section 3 of this Act to the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the house of representatives.

(c) Provides that the task force is abolished and this Act expires on September 1, 2011.

SECTION 6. Effective date: September 1, 2009.