

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 4023
By: Villarreal
Human Services
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Texas can do more to improve life outcomes for Texas families and children. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Kids Count data book, Texas ranks 37th in the United States on the 10 most important indicators of child well being. Recent data shows that more than eight percent of babies born in Texas were low birth weight babies; more than five percent of women smoked during their pregnancy; the infant mortality rate was more than six percent; and twenty-three percent of children were living in poverty. Thirty-two percent of Texas children lived in a single-parent family, and more than eleven percent of women who gave birth in Texas received late prenatal care or none at all.

The Texas Attorney General's Child Support Division cites extensive research in its publication, *The First Nine Months of Fatherhood: Paternal Contributions to Maternal and Child Health Outcomes*, that indicates a healthy and involved male partner during pregnancy has positive impacts and implications for his pregnant partner and child. Women with involved partners were 40 percent more likely to receive prenatal care in their first trimester than those without. Pregnant smokers with involved partners reduced their cigarette consumption 36 percent more than those whose partners were not involved. Fathers who were involved during the pregnancy were more likely to establish paternity at the hospital and to continue to provide emotional and economic support for their child.

Couples with positive prenatal paternal involvement were more likely to be together three years after the child's birth. An expectant father also can be an influential advocate for breastfeeding, playing a critical role in encouraging a mother to breastfeed the couple's newborn infant. Involving the father during the pregnancy increases his understanding of his child and the mother, which may help prevent domestic violence. Studies show that a healthy and engaged father improves the likelihood of a healthy pregnancy for the mother and her child.

H.B. 4023 requires the Health and Human Services Commission to conduct a study and prepare a report that evaluates and identifies potential federal funding sources to provide basic healthcare screening services to expectant fathers and to evaluate the possibility of obtaining a federal waiver or other authorization to provide these services, in an effort to address risk factors for expectant fathers and promote the positive engagement of fathers in their partners' pregnancies.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 4023 requires the Health and Human Services Commission to conduct a study to evaluate the feasibility of providing benefits or services under federally funded public benefit programs to encourage the involvement of prospective fathers of the unborn children of pregnant women receiving health care services under those programs, including the feasibility of providing simple

health screening services to those fathers that are similar to the health screening services provided to the appropriate mothers, to the extent those services are appropriate.

H.B. 4023 requires the commission, in conducting the study, to evaluate and identify funding sources available under federally funded public benefit programs to provide the benefits and services to prospective fathers, including the possibility of obtaining a federal waiver or other authorization under a federally funded public benefit program to provide those services and benefits and to consider the availability of health care providers participating in federally funded public benefit programs to provide benefits and services.

H.B. 4023 requires the commission, not later than September 1, 2010, to submit to the legislature a written report containing the findings of the study conducted under this bill and the commission's recommendations.

H.B. 4023 defines "commission," "executive commissioner," and "federally funded benefit program," and defines "health and human services agencies," by reference to the meaning assigned to that term in the Government Code.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the act does not receive the necessary vote, the act takes effect September 1, 2009.