

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 717
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Health & Human Services
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Enrolled

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Current law varies and lacks continuity when it comes to sharing information regarding children and their families among state agencies. The 81st Legislature charged the Senate Jurisprudence Committee with studying and making recommendations to promote and enable confidential information sharing among state agencies and courts serving at-risk children and youth to ensure that comprehensive and appropriate services are being provided. The committee hearing focused on the technological, legal, and fiscal barriers that prevent information sharing among entities regarding affected children and youth.

While the juvenile justice arena communicates efficiently, many state and local services for youth at-risk of delinquent behavior exist outside the juvenile justice arena (e.g., substance abuse services, mental health resources, school dropout prevention programs, gang intervention programs, et cetera). Testimony provided at the hearing from individuals, state agencies, and local agencies expressed concern regarding the lack of cohesiveness when it comes to juvenile information sharing between juvenile service providers. The lack of organization can lead to missed treatment opportunities, insufficient understanding of each youth's specific needs, duplication of services, and discontinuity of care.

Hearing participants testified that, to increase cooperation, it is necessary for juvenile service providers to work through the issues that prevent their communications, including mistrust, different policies, and different sharing methods.

S.B. 717 creates communication and collaboration between entities that address the needs of at-risk youth by encouraging the Council on Children and Families (council) to promote the sharing of information. The bill also charges the council with identifying technological methods to ensure the efficient and timely transfer of information among state agencies providing services to children and their families.

S.B. 717 amends current law relating to the purpose and duties of the Council on Children and Families.

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 Section 531.802(a), Government Code, to establish the Council on Children and Families (council) to, among other certain purposes, promote the sharing of information regarding children and their families among state agencies. Makes nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 531.803(a), Government Code, to require the council to perform certain actions, including identifying technological methods to ensure the efficient and timely transfer of information among state agencies providing health, education, and human services to children and their families. Makes nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2011.