

Implementing Children and Families of Incarcerated Parents Advisory Committee Recommendations, AU

Agency: 350 Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Budget Period: 2009-11

Recommendation Summary Text (Short Description):

In 2007, the Legislature and Governor enacted E2SHB 1422, creating a process for state agencies to review their policies related to the adequacy and availability of programs or services for children of incarcerated parents, and establishing an advisory committee to guide the process. The committee submitted an initial report on activities in 2008, and the second annual update on committee activities (containing recommendations) is due to the Governor and Legislature on January 1, 2009. The advisory committee's member agencies have made enormous progress; as a member of the task force, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) looks forward to refining the specifics of recommendations to meet the January timeline. Once the recommendations are finalized, the Superintendent will evaluate the specific requests in relation to the work of other committees, and make a request for the 2009-11 biennium.

The legislation requires OSPI to:

- Gather information and data on the children and families of inmates;
- Develop programs and policies that focus on sustaining the families during the period of the parent's incarceration and to assist reunification if appropriate; and
- Participate in the Children of Incarcerated Parents Advisory Committee and reporting the information gathered regarding the staff person's agency to the advisory committee.

In response, OSPI has disseminated a survey to educators statewide; gathered input from children, caregivers, and parents; provided professional development for educators at conferences; created a web-page for resources, and assembled a comprehensive tool-kit of resources for dissemination to all school districts.

Based on the responses of educators, children, and families so far, and in support of the Basic Education Funding Task Force, the Superintendent places a high priority on:

- Improved professional development and support for educators serving children of incarcerated parents (including cross-training with their peers at other agencies);
- Improved state funding to hire more counselors, social workers and other pupil support staff (including those with an understanding of DOC culture);
- Expanded help for students with incarcerated parents and their families (in ways that preserve client privacy and reduce stigma);
- Grants to local school districts facing urgent needs to serve large groups of children of incarcerated parents (including those impacted by transitional residential facilities); and
- Ongoing staffing at OSPI to support the needs of children and families of incarcerated parents.

Contact person

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