
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Anthony Portantino, Chair
2023 - 2024 Regular Session

AB 1479 (Garcia) - Pupil health: social-emotional, behavioral, and mental health supports

Version: June 29, 2023

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: August 14, 2023

Policy Vote: ED. 7 - 0

Mandate: No

Consultant: Lenin Del Castillo

Bill Summary: This bill establishes the Pupil Social-Emotional, Behavioral, and Mental Health Program for the California Department of Education (CDE) to grants for Tier 1 mental health supports to pupils and families.

Fiscal Impact: While the bill's provisions would be subject to an appropriation, this bill could result in ongoing Proposition 98 General cost pressures in the low millions to low tens of millions for the state to provide grant funding for the program. This estimate assumes a grant amount of anywhere from \$100,000 to \$500,000 for up to 50 recipients each year. A precise estimate would depend on the number of grants and the award amounts which are not specified in the bill. Additionally, the CDE estimates General Fund costs of approximately \$524,000 and 3.2 positions to administer the program.

Background: Existing law requires schools to notify students and parents at least twice during the school year on how to access student mental health services on campus or in the community, and authorizes schools to apply to their respective county for a grant from the county's allocation of Mental Health Services Act funds to provide these services.

Existing law requires the CDE to develop model referral protocols for addressing student mental health concerns, in consultation with specified agencies and stakeholders, and authorizes these protocols to be used on a voluntary basis by schools.

Existing law requires the CDE, by January 1, 2023, to recommend best practices, and identify evidence-based and evidence-informed training programs for schools to address youth behavioral health, including staff and student training, contingent upon an appropriation for this purpose.

Existing law requires county offices of education (COEs), in consultation with the CDE and other relevant state and local agencies, to coordinate agreements between school districts and charter schools within the county in order to develop a system through which qualified mental health professionals and other key school personnel employed by individual school districts and charter schools throughout the county could be rapidly deployed on a short- or long-term basis to an area of the county that has experienced a natural disaster or other traumatic event, in order to provide support to students and staff. (EC 49429.5)

Existing law establishes the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative Act, to be administered by the California Health and Human Services Agency, to transform California's behavioral health system in which all children and youth 25 years of age and younger, regardless of payer, are screened, supported, and served for emerging and existing behavioral health needs.

Proposed Law: This bill requires the CDE, upon appropriation, to provide eligible local educational agencies with an allocation of moneys to provide Model Tier 1 Support accessible to pupils and families. The bill specifies that all LEAs are deemed eligible, but reserves priority for LEAs with a 55% or more unduplicated English Learners (EL), foster youth, and free-and-reduced, and who have a plan approved by the department to provide Model Tier 1 Support accessible to pupils.

This bill requires the CDE, within 90 days of receipt of funding for the program, to publish a streamlined application form for eligible LEAs to submit a plan to provide Model Tier 1 Support to pupils for three consecutive school years. This bill also requires CDE to identify criteria for evaluating applicants and awarding grants within 90 days of receiving funding for the program. Eligible LEAs shall submit applications within 30 days of the streamlined application publishing and to be approved, denied, or returned by the CDE to LEA with a request for information within 30 days from receipt of the application.

This bill specifies that services may be developed by school employees with an approved plan or by community-based organizations with experienced paraprofessionals after furnishing to the LEA a full set of fingerprints and passing a criminal record background check.

This bill encourages LEAs with an approved plan to contract with community-based organizations to deliver support to families at schoolsites.

This bill expresses that the program is consistent with, and furthers the intent of, the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative Act.

This bill defines "evidence-based, Tier 1 social-emotional, behavioral, and mental health supports" under this program, as including the following:

- a) Providing support to students and families to address social-emotional and mental health concerns;
- b) Workshops and seminars for parents and families to provide social-emotional preventive interventions, including positive parenting tools;
- c) Facilitating collaboration and coordination between school and community-based providers to support students and families to obtain access to behavioral and mental health supports in school;
- d) Providing families with referrals to clinical care in order to support students' mental health needs within the community, as needed; and

- e) Facilitating behavioral training programs for school staff, including, but not limited to, behavior management strategies, mental health support training, trauma-informed practices, and professional self-care such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, Community Approach to Learning Mindfully, and Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education.

Related Legislation: AB 2124 (C. Garcia, 2022) would have required the Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop, administer, and award the Pupil Peer Support Training Program grant competitively for LEAs serving pupils in grades 9 to 12 to establish a peer support training program. Governor Newsom vetoed this bill with the following message:

Peer support programs are valuable, which is why the 2022 Budget Act funded a similar program. AB 178 allocated \$10 million for the School-Based Peer Mental Health Demonstration Project. This grant program will provide competitive grants to high schools to develop peer-to-peer support programs. With our state facing lower-than-expected revenues over the first few months of this fiscal year, it is important to remain disciplined when it comes to spending, particularly spending that is ongoing. We must prioritize existing obligations and priorities, including education, health care, public safety and safety-net programs.

AB 2221 (C. Garcia, 2020) would have required school districts to establish a peer support training program at each high school. This bill was held in the Assembly Education Committee.

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