

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
Senator Thomas Umberg, Chair
2025-2026 Regular Session

SB 479 (Arreguín)

Version: January 5, 2026

Hearing Date: January 13, 2026

Fiscal: Yes

Urgency: No

AWM

SUBJECT

Homeless adult and family multidisciplinary personnel teams

DIGEST

This bill expands existing law authorizing a county to establish a homeless adult and family multidisciplinary personnel team (MDT), to allow a city that is designated as a local health jurisdiction to establish an MDT under the same terms.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To facilitate identification and assessment of homeless individuals and connect them with housing and supportive services, AB 210 (Santiago, Ch. 544, Stats. 2017) authorized counties to establish MDTs. Under AB 210, members of MDTs may share confidential information with other MDT members to ensure continuity of care, subject to protocols developed by the county.

This bill authorizes a city that is designated as a local health jurisdiction to establish an MDT under the same terms, and subject to the same restrictions, as a county. Under the bill, a city's MDT is required to satisfy all of the same privacy protections, including information-sharing restrictions, as a county MDT. The bill, therefore, does not appear to raise any undue privacy concerns.

The Human Services Committee is scheduled to hear this bill the day before it is scheduled to be heard in this Committee; at the time of the release of this analysis, the Human Services Committee's vote is unknown. This bill is sponsored by the author and is supported by the City of Berkeley. This Committee has not received timely opposition to this bill.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE LAW

Existing law:

- 1) Defines the following relevant terms:
 - a) "Homeless" means any recorded instance of an adult or family self-identifying as homeless within the most recent 12 months, or any element contained in service utilization records indicating that an adult or family experienced homelessness within the most recent 12 months. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 18999.8(b)(1).)
 - b) "Homeless adult and family multidisciplinary personnel team" (MDT) means any team of two or more persons who are trained in the identification and treatment of homeless adults and families, and who are qualified to provide a broad range of services related to homelessness; the team may include, but is not limited to, a range of personnel in the fields of mental health and substance abuse, law enforcement, legal counsel, medicine, case managers, educational professionals, and veterans services providers. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 18999.8(b)(2).)
 - c) "Homeless services provider agency" means any governmental or other agency that has, as one of its purposes, the identification, assessment, and linkage of housing or supportive services to homeless adults or families, including entities or services agencies providing specified services. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 18999.8(b)(3).)
- 2) Provides that a county, notwithstanding any other law, may establish an MDT with the goal of facilitating the expedited identification, assessment, and linkage of homeless individuals to housing and supportive services within the county and to allow provider agencies and members of the personnel team to share confidential information for the purpose of coordinating housing and supportive services to ensure continuity of care. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 18999.9(a)(1).)
- 3) Provides that, if a city within a county that has established an MDT pursuant to 2) requests to participate in that team, the county shall allow for the participation of appropriate city personnel, as determined by the county, unless the county determines that participation by the city would hinder compliance with existing requirements and obligations or would otherwise conflict with the county's goals and objectives. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 18999.8(a)(2).)
- 4) Permits members of an MDT engaged in the identification, assessment, and linkage of housing and supportive services to homeless adults or families to disclose to, and exchange with, one another, information and writings that relate to any information that may be designated as confidential under state law if the member of the team reasonably believes it is generally relevant to the identification, reduction, or elimination of homelessness or the provision of services. Any discussion relevant to

the disclosure or exchange of the information or writings during a team meeting is confidential and, notwithstanding any other law, testimony concerning that discussion is not admissible in any criminal, civil, or juvenile court proceeding.

- a) Disclosure and exchange of information may occur telephonically and electronically if there is adequate verification of the identity of the MDT personnel who are involved in that disclosure or exchange of information.
 - b) Disclosure and exchange of information shall not be made to anyone other than members of the MDT and other specified persons qualified to receive information.
 - c) Representatives of domestic violence victim service organizations, as defined, shall obtain an individual's informed consent, as specified, before disclosing confidential information about that individual to another MDT member. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 18999.8(c).)
- 5) Permits an MDT to designate persons qualified under 1)(b) to be a member of the team for a particular case; these persons may receive and disclose relevant information and records, subject to the confidentiality provisions of 7). (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 18999.8(d).)
- 6) Provides that the sharing of information permitted under 4) shall be governed by protocols developed in each county describing how and what information may be shared by MDT members to ensure that confidential information gathered by the team is not disclosed in violation of federal or state law; a copy of the protocols shall be distributed to team members and persons participating in the team, and shall be posted on the county's website, a specified.
- a) The county shall also provide a copy of its protocols to the State Department of Social Services (DSS); DSS is not required to review or approve the protocols.
 - b) A protocol developed by the county must include specified information, including information relating to the data elements that will be shared, the participating agencies, and a description of how the information shared will be used. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 18999.8(e).)
- 7) Provides that every member of the MDT who receives information in that member's capacity as a member of the team shall be under the same privacy and confidentiality obligations and subject to the same confidentiality penalties as the person disclosing or providing the information or records; the information or records shall be maintained in a manner that ensures the maximum of privacy and confidentiality rights. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 18999.8(f).)
- 8) Provides that 1)-7) shall not be construed to restrict guarantees of privacy provided under state or federal law. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 18999.8(g).)

- 9) Provides that information and records communicated or provided to team members by all providers and agencies shall be deemed private and confidential and shall be protected from discovery and disclosure by all applicable statutory and common law protections; existing civil and criminal penalties shall apply to the inappropriate disclosure of information held by team members. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 18999.8(g).)

This bill:

- 1) Permits a city that is designated as a local health jurisdiction to establish an MDT under the same terms and conditions as a county.
- 2) Extends all of the same privacy protections for information and documentation gathered or shared by a county MDT to an MDT established by a city designated as a local health jurisdiction.

COMMENTS

1. Author's comment

According to the author:

SB 479 will authorize Berkeley, a local health jurisdiction currently operating their own homeless response team, to share crucial information between outreach teams to better coordinate services for our unsheltered neighbors. Currently, only counties have the authority to share specified information to coordinate homelessness services. Due to their unique needs, Berkeley has created their own homeless response teams that are doing great work to serve the unhoused constituents of SD 7. However, current statute has limited their efficacy because different teams can't communicate information with each other. This bill will institute a minor change in code that will allow Berkeley to serve unhoused residents more effectively by authorizing information sharing between departments to coordinate services and care.

2. This bill permits a city that is a local health jurisdiction to establish an MDT under the same terms as a county

To facilitate identification and assessment of homeless individuals and connect them with housing and supportive services, AB 210 (Santiago, Ch. 544, Stats. 2017) authorized counties to establish MDTs. Under AB 210, members of MDTs may share confidential information with other MDT members to ensure continuity of care, subject to protocols developed by the county.

This bill authorizes a city that is designated as a local health jurisdiction to establish an MDT under the same terms, and subject to the same restrictions, as a county. Under the

bill, a city's MDT is required to satisfy all of the same privacy protections, including information-sharing restrictions, as a county MDT. The bill, therefore, does not appear to raise any undue privacy concerns.

3. Arguments in support

According to the City of Berkeley:

In Berkeley, multi-service teams have tried to coordinate care but given the existing legal limitations, they are too often hamstrung from sharing information that would benefit homeless people. In some cases, city staff have gone to encampments to offer services to individuals currently under care of the mental health team, but lacking shared information, these city staff providers have been confronted by hostile individuals that they are untrained to deal with for whom they could have made better care choices if only they had better information which their colleagues were constrained from sharing. This can put people living outside and caregivers in danger and is a suboptimal way to support people struggling through homelessness.

If cities are to meaningfully address homelessness, while also complying with the Governor's Executive Order on encampments, they need the legal ability to share information across teams, as counties currently can, to ensure that individuals in encampments can access and receive services, care, and housing. SB 479 will ensure that cities now have that legal ability. This is a small, but crucial change in the law that will have an outsized impact on addressing homelessness. Having led the city of Berkeley's Health, Housing and Community Services Department, and now as the City Manager, I have had firsthand experience with the struggles of the current situation, and I strongly support SB 479.

SUPPORT

City of Berkeley

OPPOSITION

None received

RELATED LEGISLATION

Pending legislation: AB 654 (Caloza, 2025) requires the County of Los Angeles to establish a homelessness resource telephone system to receive telephone calls regarding individuals who are experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, homelessness in order to provide those individuals with resources. AB 654 is pending before the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Prior legislation:

AB 1948 (Rendon, Ch. 94, Stats. 2024) eliminated the sunset date the pilot program established by AB 728 (Santiago, Ch. 337, Stats. 2019) and added the County of San Mateo to the list of counties authorized by the pilot.

AB 728 (Santiago, Ch. 337, Stats. 2019) established a pilot program in the Counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Santa Clara, and Ventura, that authorized the MDTs established in those counties to operate with the additional goal of facilitating the expedited identification, assessment, and linkage of individuals at risk of homelessness to housing and supportive services within that county, and the goal of facilitating the expedited prevention of homelessness for those individuals.

AB 210 (Santiago, Ch. 544, Stats. 2017) authorized counties to establish MDTs. *See* Comment 2 for further discussion.

PRIOR VOTES:

The Senate Human Services Committee's vote was not available at the time this analysis was published.
