



ASSEMBLYWOMAN QUIRK-SILVA, 65TH DISTRICT

AB 552 (QUIRK-SILVA): INTEGRATED SCHOOL-BASED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

SUMMARY

AB 552 would create the Integrated School-Based Behavioral Health Partnership Program encouraging local educational agencies (LEAs) and county behavioral health agencies to collaborate on providing on-school campus services for *all* students, at the earliest onset of a behavioral health condition.

BACKGROUND

More than 50 percent of mental illness cases begin by age 14. For children whose mental health concerns go unnoticed or untreated, especially those between the ages of 12 and 17, rates of substance abuse, depression, and lower school achievement increase leading to other health-related problems and a lower quality of life.

Addressing behavioral health conditions as early as possible, is critical in promoting the health and well-being of students. By providing early intervention services at schools, behavioral health conditions can be identified at the earliest onset.

According to a survey of county behavioral health agencies, schools are reluctant to allow county behavioral health professionals on campus unless all students can be served. Understandably, school administrators are unwilling to treat one group of students differently than another, especially when their health and wellbeing is at stake.

As California continues to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic, we are experiencing an unprecedented rise in behavioral health needs among children and youth. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the proportion of children's mental health-related emergency department (ED) visits among all pediatric ED visits increased and remained elevated during the pandemic. Compared with 2019, the proportion of mental health-related visits for children aged 5–11 and 12–17 years increased approximately 24% and 31%, respectively throughout the pandemic. Students have been out of school since March. Isolation, anxiety over the uncertainty of the immediate and long-term future, lack of peer support,

and concerns with family have and will continue to take a toll with children and youth. Behavioral health, mental wellness and support will be crucial when students return to school.

SOLUTION

AB 552 would establish the Integrated School-Based Behavioral Health Partnership Program to provide early intervention for, and access to, behavioral services for *all* students.

The collaborative program between the Local Educational Agencies (LEA) and the county behavioral health agencies (County) would be established through a memorandum of understanding (MOU). The MOU would outline the requirements for the partnership, including:

- County to provide one or more specified licensing professionals to serve pupils with serious emotional disturbances or substance use disorders, or who are at risk of developing a serious behavioral health condition.
- LEA to provide location and space appropriate for the delivery of behavioral health services.
- Establish processes, delivery of services and types of services, as well as requirements for assisting pupils with private insurance and reimbursement procedures.
- Develop referral process for LEAs to make appropriate referrals to designated County professionals.

AB 552 would also require the Partnership Programs to annually report specified information to the Mental Health Oversight and Accountability Commission and the California Legislature.

SUPPORT

- County Behavioral Health Directors Association - California (CBHDA) (Co-Sponsor)
- California Alliance of Children and Families (Co-Sponsor)