

AB 741 (Williams): Mental Health Crisis Residential Care for Youth

SUMMARY

AB 741 expands the definition of Short-Term Residential Treatment Center, thereby creating a category of licensing in state statute for children's mental health crisis residential services. The bill would require such programs that plan to serve Medi-Cal beneficiaries to be certified to provide Medi-Cal specialty mental health services by the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) or by a county Mental Health Plan under contract to DHCS.

BACKGROUND

Currently, an estimated 3 out of every 4 children in the U.S. that need mental health services do not receive them.¹ Nearly 20 percent of high school students in California consider suicide at some point in their lives and more than 10 percent actually attempt it. With 47 out of 58 counties lacking any child/adolescent psychiatric hospital inpatient beds for children under 12 (and fewer than 70 beds statewide) the need for children's mental health crisis residential services could not be more acute.

Guided by the federal Olmstead Act, mental health treatment is to be provided in the least restrictive setting possible. Federal law requires Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) services for every individual under 21 years of age who is covered under Medicaid (i.e., Medi-Cal in California). The Medi-Cal program provides EPSDT specialty mental health services through county Mental Health Plans under contract with the Department of Health Care Services.

Federal law requires that the EPSDT benefit include an array of mental health screenings and services whether or not the services are covered under the State Medicaid Plan. Among the

benefits already included in the State Mental Health Plan are: EPSDT supplemental Specialty Mental Health Services; crisis intervention; crisis stabilization; and crisis residential treatment services. (CCR, title 9, chapter 11, section 1810.247).

There is no licensing category however specific to children's crisis residential services. As a result, this critically needed service – in lieu of inpatient psychiatric care – is missing from the continuum of care.

Here is an example of the status quo. A 9-year-old child is experiencing increased behavioral and emotional symptoms which include persistent suicidal and homicidal thoughts. Outpatient services available within the family's county are not able to meet the child's increased needs. The only immediately available intervention is psychiatric hospitalization. The child experiences six hospital stays in three weeks, all at facilities at least 3-5 hours away from home. When the client returns home, the lack of crisis services increases the risk of a yet another hospitalization.

THE BILL

AB 741 would add a sub-category of licensing under Short-Term Residential Treatment Center (STRTC), thereby creating a licensing category in state statute for children's mental health crisis residential services. These services could be accessed through private health care plans, Medi-Cal managed care plans, and county Mental Health Plans.

The bill would require such programs that plan to serve Medi-Cal beneficiaries to be certified to provide Medi-Cal specialty mental health services by the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) or by a county Mental Health Plan under contract to DHCS. Licensing children's mental health crisis residential programs as STRTPs

¹ (Kataoka S, et al. (2002). Unmet need for mental health care among U.S. children: Variation by ethnicity and insurance status. *American Journal of Psychiatry* 159(9), 1548-1555.)

allows for costs of board and care to be covered by the AFDC-Foster Care program, if a child or youth in mental health crisis is also in foster care.

With the appropriate licensing category established, the state and counties would have all the elements of the continuum available to implement the services under the EPSDT requirements already in place.

SUPPORT

- California Alliance of Child and Family Services (Co-Sponsor)
- California Council of Community Mental Health Agencies (Co-Sponsor)

County Entities

- County Welfare Director Association
- County of Santa Barbara
- Humboldt County Transition Aged Youth Collaborative
- Oxnard Police Department
- Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors
- Santa Barbara County Sheriff Bill Brown
- Ventura County Board of Supervisors
- Ventura County Sheriff Geoff Dean

Youth and Parent Organizations

- Humboldt County Youth Advisory Board
- Mental Health America of California
- Mental Health America of Los Angeles
- NAMI California
- Redwood Quality Management Company (Mendocino County)
- Transitions-Mental Health Association
- United Advocates for Children of California
- United Advocates for Children and Families
- United Parents
- Youth In Mind
- Youth and Family Services Committee of the Ventura County Behavioral Health Advisory Board

Advocacy Organizations

- Accessing Health Services for California's Children in Foster Care Task Force
- California Mental Health Advocates for Children and Youth
- Child Abuse Listening Mediation
- Common Sense Kids Action
- Disability Rights California
- Foster Care Task Force
- National Council of Behavioral Health
- Steinberg Institute for Advancing Mental Health Policy

- Young Minds Advocacy Project

Child and Family Serving Organizations

- Anka Behavioral Health, Inc.
- Aviva Family and Children's Services
- Bill Wilson Center
- Casa Pacifica Centers for Children and Families
- Crittenton Services for Children and Families
- David & Margaret Youth and Family Services
- Family Care Network, Inc.
- Hathaway-Sycamores Child and Family Services
- Hillside
- Junior Blind of America
- La Clinica de la Raza
- Lincoln Child Center
- Pacific Clinics
- Redwood Community Services
- Remi Vista, Inc.
- San Diego Center for Children
- Seneca Family of Agencies
- Stanford Youth Solutions
- Stars Behavioral Health Groups
- The Guidance Center
- The Village Family Services
- Uplift Family Services
- Valley Teen Ranch
- West Coast Children's Clinic
- Youth Homes, Inc.
- Youth Solutions

Health Organizations

- California Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
- California Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians
- California Primary Care Association
- Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society

Other Supporters:

- California State University Channel Islands
- National Association of Social Workers, California Chapter
- 10 individual parents and teachers

OPPOSITION

- Department of Finance

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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