



CALIFORNIA SCHOOL HEALTH CENTERS ASSOCIATION
Putting health care where kids are ... in school.

NEWS RELEASE

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April 9, 2013

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Assembly Bill Aims to Boost School-Based Care for Kids Impacted by Trauma

(Oakland, CA) – California students affected by traumatic events or violence in their communities may soon have greater access to important mental health services, thanks to a new bill – AB 174 – recently introduced in the California Legislature by Assemblymember Rob Bonta (D-Oakland).

Across California, many of the children and youth who are most impacted by traumatic events – including shootings and gang violence -- cannot access the mental health care they need. Children and youth living in low-income neighborhoods, as well as children and youth of color, are disproportionately impacted by trauma, including gun violence, according to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. At least 20% of California children with family incomes below \$25,000 feel unsafe in their neighborhoods, compared to just 1.6% of California children with family incomes above \$125,000, according to KidsData.org.

“All forms of violence, including gun violence, have become a tragic fact of life for children in the 18th Assembly District. For example, Oakland suffered from 131 homicides in 2012. Many children are faced with serious traumatic complications from growing up in a violent environment, including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, which among other things make it difficult to become an engaged and productive pupil at school. This is a problem we need to attack from all angles. We have a responsibility to protect our students and ensure they are receiving the proper services for recovery. AB 174 helps create that pathway to recovery by establishing a grant program for organizations providing those focused trauma services to students,” said Assemblymember Bonta.

If approved, AB 174 would expand student access to trauma-informed mental health services through school-based health centers (SBHCs), where care is accessible, affordable, and youth-friendly. SBHCs put medical, mental health, and, in some instances, dental care on school grounds across the state. They are a proven model for delivering effective mental health services: not only can school-based mental health care reduce both depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, but SBHCs are significantly better than other care settings at reaching adolescents.

“Students in California who are most at risk for falling behind come to class burdened with trauma they have experienced at home or in their communities, and which manifests itself in behavioral challenges, poor attendance, and low academic achievement. AB 174 creates a true safety net of caring, informed adults, and it offers services where kids are so they can reach their full potential and thrive,” said Serena Clayton, the Executive Director of the California School Health Centers Association, one of the bill’s co-sponsors.

Currently, there is no state funding explicitly directed to either SBHCs or school-based programs focused on mental health and trauma. If approved, AB 174 would create a program for a variety of essential school-based mental health services, including individual, group, and family counseling; youth development programming focused on preventing and addressing violence; school-wide violence prevention programs; and support for teachers and other school staff in identifying and responding to students’ trauma-related needs.

The California School Health Centers Association (CSHC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the health and academic success of children and youth by advocating for policies and funding to expand and improve SBHCs in California. Learn more at www.schoolhealthcenters.org.

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Editor’s Note: CSHC can provide contact information for school-based health center directors who can talk about the impact AB 174 will have on the ground. For more information, contact CSHC Communications Manager Marcel Reynolds at 510-268-1031 or mreynolds@schoolhealthcenters.org.