



Assemblymember Rudy Salas, 32nd District
ASSEMBLY BILL 1940 – SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS
FACT SHEET

BACKGROUND

School-based health centers (SBHCs) provide an integrated approach to delivering comprehensive physical and behavioral health services in school settings. Since first established in the 1980s, California’s SBHCs have been growing in number. The state currently has 293 SBHCs that provide access to high-quality, comprehensive health care to 286,000 children in or near K-12 schools. Despite the growing number, only 3 percent of public schools in California currently have an SBHC.

Children and youth served by SBHCs live in many of the state’s most under-resourced neighborhoods where children and families experience barriers to accessing preventative, primary, and behavioral health care and have high rates of emergency room visits, obesity, asthma, and exposure to community stress and trauma. California’s SBHCs have grown to become an important part of the health care safety net, providing access to a range of critical health care services for thousands of underserved children and adolescents.

ISSUE

Children are not receiving the care they need. Less than 50 percent of Medi-Cal children receive all required preventative health services. Child vaccination rates have decreased since the beginning of the pandemic. There was an estimated 27 percent decline in pediatric office visits in 2020, and students showed a 25 percent increase in rates of suicidal behavior. The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare the increasing need for health and mental health supports, as well as the low access to those services for historically marginalized communities.

SBHCs provide quality, age and developmentally appropriate comprehensive health care and other support services on or near public school campuses. These centers give children and families easy and safe access to much-needed medical care. They support the whole child by providing services to meet their physical, mental, and social emotional health needs. Research also shows that SBHCs have a positive impact on absences, dropout rates, disciplinary problems, and other academic outcomes. SBHCs provide students a safe, welcoming, youth-friendly space where their holistic health needs are met through comprehensive health care services coordinated with the school and other community partners.

EXISTING LAW

Existing law requires the State Department of Public Health, in cooperation with the State Department of Education, to establish a Public School Health Center Support Program to assist school health centers, which are defined as centers or programs, located at or near local education agencies, that provide age-appropriate health care services at the program site or through referrals.

THIS BILL

AB 1940 updates California’s School-Based Health Center Support Program, the Program’s grant structure, and redefines the centers to mean a student-focused health center or clinic that provides clinical health care services by qualified health professionals. The bill authorizes an SBHC to provide primary medical care, behavioral health services, or dental care services. The bill also improves outreach and enrollment strategies for children in different health care coverage programs. AB 1940 will go a long way to addressing the significant disparities in child and youth health and education outcomes.

SUPPORT

California School-Based Health Alliance (Sponsor)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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