



SUMMARY

AB 2022 requires there be one or more mental health professional on all elementary and secondary school campuses and establishes a ratio of one mental health professional per every 600 students.

BACKGROUND

Existing law requires the governing board of school districts to give diligent care to the health and physical development of pupils. The board is also authorized to recruit and hire mental health professionals. In addition, existing law requires local school districts to develop a pupil suicide prevention policy for grades 7 to 12. However, the state lacks direction on how localities should develop early prevention and intervention to address mental health concerns for children and youth.

PROBLEM

Three hundred thousand California children between the ages of 4 and 11 have mental health needs, but over 70 percent never receive treatment; and for youth in poverty or with non-English speaking parents, over 80 percent never receive treatment. Additionally, nearly 57 percent of California children have experienced trauma.

Unmet mental health needs are connected to poor educational outcomes, directly affecting student attendance, behavior, and readiness to learn. This issue ranks among the highest concerns for California educators and research shows they believe they lack the proper training to address a child's mental health needs.

Schools have been identified as the best setting for mental health prevention and treatment services. However, in California there are relatively few schools that provide on campus mental health services, and students to pupil support personnel ratios are too high to provide timely access. The California student to school counselor ratio is 792 to one. For psychologists it is 1,265 to one, with social workers calculated at 12,870 to one.

SOLUTION

Of the small number of students who receive treatment, 70 percent access mental health support solely through school. The inspiration for AB 2022 came from dynamic young people engaged on this issue, advocating for mental health services on all school campuses.

To that end, AB 2022 requires there be at least one mental health professional on campus to provide timely and equitable access to mental health professionals, thus increasing access for students of color and historically underserved communities.

In addition, under AB 2022, mental health professionals will connect students and families to community services as needed and provide professional development to staff in mental health support and trauma-informed practices.

SPONSORS

California Youth Empowerment Network (CAYEN)
Mental Health American of California (MHAC)

Staff Contact:
Katelin Van Deynze
(916) 319-2025
Katelin.VanDeynze@asm.ca.gov