

AB 741 (Williams): Crisis Care for Youth

SUMMARY

AB 741 expands the definition of Social Rehabilitation Facility from exclusively adults to include children, thereby creating a category of licensing in state statute for children's crisis residential services.

BACKGROUND

The objective for mental health services, guided by the federal Olmstead Act, is to provide treatment in the least restrictive setting possible. The overarching goal of existing programs is to keep youth in crisis in calm, familiar environments where their mental health needs can be met.

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 crisis residential services could not be more acute.

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 (DHCS). Federal law defines EPSDT services to 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: crisis intervention; crisis stabilization; crisis residential treatment services; and EPSDT supplemental Specialty Mental Health Services. (CCR, title 9, chapter 11, section 1810.247).

Without a licensing category specific to children's crisis residential programs, however, this critically needed service – both in lieu of inpatient care and as a step down from inpatient 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. As the client returns home, the lack of crisis services increase the risk of a yet another hospitalization.

THE BILL

AB 741 would broaden the definition of Social Rehabilitation Facility to include children, thereby creating a category of licensing in state statute for children's crisis residential services. Adding this category of licensing would provide federal matching funds by connecting the services provided by the Mental Rehabilitation Center to Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility to Social Rehabilitation Facility.

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.

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.)

SUPPORT

- California Alliance of Child and Family Services (Co-Sponsor)
- California Council of Community Mental Health Agencies (Co-Sponsor)
- Aviva Family and Children's Services
- Bill Wilson Center
- California Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians
- California Mental Health Advocates for Children and Youth
- California Primary Care Association
- California State University Channel Islands
- Casa Pacifica Centers for Children and Families
- Common Sense Kids Action
- County of Santa Barbara
- David & Margaret Youth and Family Services
- Family Care Network, Inc.
- Hathaway-Sycamores Child and Family Services
- Hillsides
- Junior Blind of America
- Lincoln Child Center
- NAMI California
- National Association of Social Workers (NASW), California Chapter
- National Council of Behavioral Health
- Pacific Clinics
- Redwood Community Services
- Redwood Quality Management Company
- Remi Vista Youth and Family Services
- Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors
- Seneca Family of Agencies
- Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society
- Stars Behavioral Health Groups (SBHG)
- Steinberg Institute for Advancing Mental Health Policy
- Trinity Youth Services
- United Advocates for Children and Families
- Young Minds Advocacy Project
- Youth In Mind
- Youth Homes, Inc.

OPPOSITION

- None on file

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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