



FACT SHEET

AB 834 (O'Donnell)

Office of School-Based Health Programs

SUMMARY

AB 834 would establish an Office of School-Based Health programs within the California Department of Education (CDE), to provide leadership and assistance to school districts offering health programs through the public schools.

PROBLEM

Since the early 1990's, schools have been eligible to receive reimbursement from the federal government for direct health services provided at school sites through a program called Medi-Cal LEA Billing.

Until very recently, these services have been limited to Medi-Cal eligible students enrolled in special education programs. But due to a federal change, known as "Free Care," this program is about to be dramatically expanded to all Medi-Cal eligible students.

This change will mean that many more students will be eligible to receive health services at school, including care for asthma, diabetes, and mental health issues. These conditions, when poorly treated, can have a devastating impact on school attendance, behavior, and academic achievement.

Historically, California has lagged behind other states in the amount of federal funding it has received through the Medi-Cal LEA Billing program. Free Care provides an unprecedented opportunity for California schools to reverse that pattern and serve more children.

Many school districts also participate in the Medicaid Administrative Activities program, which covers administrative costs for activities such as helping families enroll and access services for their students through Medi-Cal.

To run smoothly and maximize funding eligibility, school districts require support from state agencies responsible for both health and education. But in

California there is no institutionalized partnership between the Department of Health Care Services and the CDE. This is in part because, unlike many other states, California does not have an office within CDE to coordinate various health programs and services delivered through the schools.

Other states have successfully drawn down federal funds to support the administrative costs of supporting school districts when they interface with both their state health agencies and the federal government, and California could do the same to support an Office of School-Based Health Programs.

With the expansion of eligibility to receive federal funds for school-based health services, there is an opportunity for the CDE to play a vital role with assisting districts that wish to participate and draw down federal funds.

SOLUTION

AB 834 requires the establishment of an Office of School-Based Health Programs within for the purpose of administering health-related programs and advising on issues related to the delivery of school-based Medi-Cal services in the state.

The bill would authorize the Office to develop a workgroup and technical advisory groups to assist in its work. As noted above, costs for this office could be offset by federal funds.

SPONSOR AND CONTACT

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