

California Comprehensive Addiction Recovery Act:

ADDICTION TREATMENT WORKFORCE EXPANSION

Fact Sheet

SUMMARY

This bill would establish workforce expansion programming to increase the number of alcohol drug counselors in California for the purpose of filling critical shortages and to prepare for the expansion of youth treatment created by the passage of Proposition 64 (Adult Use of Marijuana Act). The bill would set priorities for the \$10 million allotment earmarked by the initiative for professionalization of the workforce. To achieve this purpose the bill would conform the state's outdated definition of "mental health providers," as it pertains to loan forgiveness and other educational incentives, to align with federal terminology, "behavioral health," which includes mental health and substance use disorder careers, by renaming the *Licensed Mental Health Service Provider Education Program* the *Behavioral Health Service Provider Education Program*. This would provide access to federal critical shortage funding for alcohol drug counselors. Additionally, this bill would address barriers to entry to the field of addiction counseling by providing waivers for certification and testing fees required to obtain state required certification. To address pay disparities that create workforce shortages in the Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System (DMC-ODS), publicly funded treatment, the bill would institute augmentation for county budgets for increasing addiction counselor salaries by 20% over a four year period. To attract new entrants to the profession, the development of a career ladder and a statewide career awareness program is also proposed, using funds provided by the AUMA.

BACKGROUND

There are an estimated 3.5 million persons with diagnosable substance use disorders in California, there are less than 20,000 alcoholism and drug abuse counselors of an unknown competency level currently certified by private credentialing bodies in

California. California employs fewer SUD counselors per population than the national average. California addiction treatment providers list inability to recruit and retain counselors as one of the top three issues impacting capacity expansion. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that addiction counselors earn an average of about \$40,000 a year. Stressful workloads in a profession that involves treating a life threatening disease can have an effect on many counselors. Roughly one of every four substance-abuse clinicians chooses to leave the job in the United States every year.

Conservative estimates indicate that the AUMA will provide \$600 million in new treatment funding for addicted youth. With critical shortages in the addiction workforce currently, there will simple not be enough counselors trained and certified to fill positions created by the Act.

PREVIOUS LEGISLATION

None

THIS BILL

This bill improves access to addiction treatment; provides education opportunities for student and second career adults; and supports the goal of the California Comprehensive Addiction Recovery Act (CCARA), to create the nation's first "on demand" treatment system for addiction. The bill provides:

- Student loan repayment for alcohol drug counselors
- Certification and testing fee waivers
- No cost tuition for college and BPPE schools who offer courses to become licensed addiction counselors

- The creation of a uniform career ladder to guide professionals to higher levels of knowledge, skills and experience.
- An Information campaign to draw interest in the profession
- Increases in reimbursement for direct treatment staff expenses for counties

STATUS

Seeking author(s)

SUPPORT

- California Consortium of Addiction Programs and Professionals (CCAPP)
- California Association of DUI Treatment Providers (CADTP)
- California Association of Alcohol Drug Educators (CAADE)
- Numerous treatment programs

OPPOSITION

None

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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