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Assembly California Legislature

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## **AB 2804: ADDICTION TREATMENT WORKFORCE EXPANSION**

COAUTHORS: NONE

### **IN BRIEF:**

There are an estimated 3.5 million persons with diagnosable substance use disorders in California, yet there are less than 20,000 substance use disorder treatment counselors currently certified by private credentialing bodies in California. California employs fewer SUD counselors per population than the national average.

### **THE ISSUE:**

There can be no increase in access to addiction treatment in California without a corresponding increase in the number of competently trained professionals to deliver it. Californians willing and ready to enter treatment die while waiting for openings at treatment programs. 41% of the substance use disorder treatment workforce is identified as “registered” (have not met testing and education requirements). Registrants are considered “entry level” employees, yet they may continue to work in the status of registrant for five years. Employers cannot fill staff vacancies to meet demand for services, while low wages and high turnover created by the lack of a career ladder and disjointed professional standards plague the addiction treatment job market.

### **THE SOLUTION:**

In an effort to end systemic shortages of competent substance use disorder counselors, this bill creates planning for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century substance use disorder workforce to address the opioid crisis by requiring a statewide needs assessment for the addiction treatment workforce; outlines incentives for cross training other licensed professionals in mental health and primary care areas; and addresses planning for additional counselors with youth treatment competency. Expanding and improving the substance use disorder workforce supports the goal of creating the nation’s first “on demand” treatment system for substance use disorder and creates the foundation for California’s youth treatment system set to be implemented in 2019.

### **SUPPORT:**

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