



May 23, 2020

The Honorable Toni Atkins
Pro Tempore
California State Senate

The Honorable Holly Mitchell
Chair
Senate Committee on Budget
and Fiscal Review

The Honorable Dr. Richard Pan
Chair
Senate Budget
Subcommittee 3 Health
and Human Services

RE: Budget Request to Establish Youth Mental Health First Aid Pilot Programs

Dear Chair Pan and Senators:

On behalf of the signatories of this letter, we would like to convey our support of an appropriation of **\$1.63 million from the General Fund for FY 2020/21 or any available federal funds to establish Youth Mental Health First Aid Pilot Programs in impacted counties**, to be administered by the Department of Health Care Services.

The mental health crisis amongst adolescents experiencing or who know someone experiencing mental health or substance use disorders is growing at alarming levels, especially in light of COVID-19. Last month in the span of only one week, six teenagers committed suicide across the state—Santa Clara, San Diego, and Sacramento Counties—while schools are out of session. Given the contagion effect of suicide, we expect this number to continue to rise. The current pandemic is exacerbating the already alarming rate of mental health crisis in youth seen in the past.

Youth Mental Health First Aid is a six-hour course specifically designed to teach adults who regularly interact with young people how to help an adolescent (age 12-18) who is experiencing a mental health or addiction challenge or crisis. Research shows

that the sooner youth get help for such concerns, the more likely they are to have positive outcomes. Youth Mental Health First Aid is utilized by a variety of public and private entities and is tailored to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of diverse audiences.

Over 20 states have made Mental Health First Aid a priority by:

- Implementing training programs for groups like first responders, law enforcement, teachers, veterans, and child protective services;
- Allocating funding for public health or community behavioral health organizations to implement training programs; and
- Requiring training and/or certification for professional groups who frequently interact with high-risk communities.

In California, Youth Mental Health First Aid has been made available largely through grants from local, state, and federal sources to mental health service providers and non-profits. Through these efforts, Youth Mental Health First Aid has grown from a handful of programs to a statewide network of close to 700 instructors and 52,000 certified Mental Health First Aiders. ***Even with these efforts, however, less than three percent of Californians are trained to recognize and respond to signs of mental illness or substance use.***

A Youth Mental Health First Aid Pilot Program

In order to expand Youth Mental Health First Aid, we propose **a pilot program to provide Youth Mental Health First Aid training to school-based Crisis Intervention Teams (CITs)** made up of teachers and other school staff ***in four diverse counties*** in the southern, central, and northern regions of California. The participating areas include: **Butte county, Plumas county, Santa Barbara county, and Tri-Cities (Claremont, Pomona, and La Verne).**

School-based CITs address the mental health needs of students, staff, and the community during and after a crisis event. When the emergency is a mental health crisis event, the CIT is the main responder. Persons capable of providing mental health services are ideal for this team. They may include school psychologists, social workers, marriage and family counselors, school counselors, school nurses and others. When such a person is not available on the school staff, the principal, or designee may take on this role with the support of outside professionals including outside law enforcement and/or the school resource officer. ***We believe everyone responding to a mental health crisis event on our school campuses must be trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid and equipped with the skills to identify and respond to the challenges appropriately.***

Our coalition has worked with UCSF's School Health Services Evaluation and Research Team to build out a robust evaluation component to the pilot program. The

evaluation will collect both process and outcome data to document not only the reach of the project, but also the effects on participants. The UCSF team is currently conducting an evaluation of the YMHFA trainings conducted by the California Department of Education and will build upon those efforts to design and implement the proposed pilot project evaluation.

Our request of \$1.63 million in General Fund or available federal dollars will cover all the costs of trainings, evaluation, and administrative costs at the pilot locations.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact CBHA's Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs, Le Ondra Clark Harvey, at (916) 557-1166 x400 or lclarkharvey@cccbha.org.

Sincerely,



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