

SENATE BILL SB-67

Introduced by Senator Marie Alvarado-Gil (R-4)

An act relating to Rural Youth Prevention and Early Intervention Program..

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB-67, Marie Alvarado-Gil (R-4). Rural Youth Prevention and Early Intervention Program..

Existing law establishes and funds various programs administered by the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) to support children's and youth behavioral health, substance-use prevention, early intervention, and related services. These programs may be delivered through county behavioral health departments, schools, community-based organizations, health care providers, and other qualified entities.

Existing programs provide behavioral-health and substance-use prevention resources to young people throughout California. However, rural communities may face additional barriers to accessing those resources, including geographic distance, transportation limitations, provider availability, and limited local capacity. This bill would address those barriers by supporting local prevention, service navigation, referral, and coordination efforts that connect youth and families with existing services.

This bill would establish the Rural Youth Prevention and Early Intervention Program within DHCS to provide grants for substance-use prevention, behavioral-health early intervention, family support, school and community partnerships, and telehealth services for youth in rural communities.

DHCS would prioritize projects that address demonstrated access needs, coordinate with existing programs, and establish measurable outcomes. The department would develop guidelines and procedures to administer the program and reduce duplication with existing behavioral-health and substance-use prevention services.

Vote: Majority. **Appropriations/fiscal:** yes. **Local program:** no.

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

- (a) Young people in rural communities may experience barriers to accessing behavioral-health and substance-use prevention services because of geographic distance, transportation limitations, provider availability, and limited local service capacity.
- (b) Early intervention and prevention can provide young people and families with support before behavioral-health or substance-use concerns develop into more serious crises.
- (c) California has existing youth behavioral-health and substance-use prevention programs. The purpose of this bill is not to replace or duplicate those programs, but to address rural access barriers by supporting local prevention, service navigation, referral, and coordination efforts.
- (d) Partnerships among schools, county agencies, behavioral-health providers, community-based organizations, Tribal organizations, families, and other youth-serving organizations can improve

the ability of rural communities to connect young people with appropriate services.

SEC. 2. The Department of Health Care Services shall establish the Rural Youth Prevention and Early Intervention Program.

(a) The program shall provide competitive grants to eligible applicants for projects designed to increase access to prevention and early-intervention services for youth in rural communities.

(b) Eligible applicants may include any of the following:

(1) County behavioral health departments.

(2) School districts and county offices of education.

(3) Community-based organizations.

(4) Tribal organizations.

(5) Youth-serving organizations.

(6) Local governments.

(7) Partnerships among two or more eligible entities.

(c) An eligible applicant shall demonstrate that the proposed project serves youth residing in a rural community as defined by criteria established by the department.

(d) Grant applications shall identify the population to be served, the barriers to accessing services, the proposed activities, and measurable outcomes.

SEC. 3. Grant funds may be used for activities including, but not limited to, the following:

(a) Substance-use prevention and education programs for youth.

(b) Early behavioral-health intervention, screening, and support services that supplement existing services and address demonstrated gaps in rural communities.

(c) Family support, service navigation, and referrals that help youth and families access existing behavioral-health or substance-use services.

(d) Partnerships between schools and qualified behavioral-health providers or community-based organizations.

(e) Telehealth, technology-assisted services, or other strategies that improve access to existing prevention and early-intervention services when appropriate to address geographic barriers.

(f) Community-based prevention programs designed to connect youth with supportive services before a crisis occurs.

SEC. 4. The Department of Health Care Services shall administer the program.

(a) The department shall establish application procedures, eligibility requirements, grant criteria, reporting requirements, and other guidelines necessary to implement the program.

(b) In awarding grants, the department shall consider the demonstrated need for services, the number of youth to be served, the extent of geographic or transportation barriers, the applicant's ability to coordinate with existing programs, the extent to which the proposed project addresses an identified rural access gap, and the measurable outcomes proposed by the applicant.

(c) The department shall coordinate the program with existing state and local youth behavioral-health and substance-use prevention programs to reduce duplication of services and prioritize projects that address unmet rural access needs.

SEC. 5. Each grant recipient shall submit information to the department regarding the implementation and outcomes of its funded activities.

(a) Outcome measures may include participation in prevention programs, successful connections to services, family engagement, and other measures determined appropriate by the department.

(b) The department may use the information submitted by grant recipients to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and inform future funding decisions.

SEC. 6. The sum of four million dollars (\$4,000,000) is hereby appropriated from funds identified by the Legislature for purposes of this bill, to be available over four fiscal years, upon appropriation by the Legislature.

(a) Four hundred thousand dollars (\$400,000) shall be available to the Department of Health Care Services for program administration, technical assistance, evaluation, and grant management.

(b) Three million six hundred thousand dollars (\$3,600,000) shall be awarded through competitive grants to eligible applicants.

(c) The Department of Health Care Services may use a portion of the funds for program

administration, technical assistance, evaluation, and grant management.

(d) The remaining funds shall be awarded through competitive grants to eligible applicants.

SEC. 7. The Department of Health Care Services shall implement this act consistent with applicable state and federal law.