

Be the Voice to Stop Suicide

Issue Brief

Suicide is a leading, yet preventable public health problem in California.

- Suicide is the **2nd** leading cause of death for youth, teens, and young adults ages 15-34.
- Suicide is the **4th** leading cause of death for adults ages 35-44, the **5th** leading cause for adults ages 45-54, and the **8th** leading cause for adults ages 55-64.
- Suicide is the **11th** leading cause of death overall.
- In 2017, we lost **4,312** California residents to suicide.

We know that upwards of 90% of individuals who ultimately die by suicide were living with a diagnosable mental health condition at the time of their death; often these conditions are undiagnosed or untreated. To prevent suicide, we must identify persons who may be suicidal and take an active role in connecting them to quality and affordable health care, **before** they reach the point of a suicidal crisis. We must also work together to better ensure those in crisis have access to crisis services and supports.

Support SB 11 [Beall] – Mental Health Parity

State and federal mental health parity laws require that insurance plans cover mental health and substance use conditions the same way they cover other types of medical conditions – i.e., they must offer the same terms and conditions and be no more restrictive.

SB 11 would require health care service plans and insurers to submit an annual report to the Department of Managed Health Care or the Department of Insurance certifying compliance with state and federal mental health parity laws. It would also require the Departments to review those reports, to publicize the reports and results of their reviews, and to annually report this information to the legislature. The bill would also prohibit insurers from imposing prior authorization or step therapy requirements on prescription medications approved by the FDA for the treatment of substance use disorders, and from excluding coverage for such medications and any associated counseling or wraparound services on the grounds that those medications and services were court ordered.

Assessment and treatment for mental health and substance use conditions can save lives, but only if individuals at risk can afford to obtain said care. This is why parity in insurance coverage for mental health is critical. It is impossible to know if insurers are complying with parity laws without collecting and examining the data as required in this bill. We must all work together to ensure that mental health care is accessible by all who need it, and that all insured California citizens receive the health care coverage which they are entitled to by law.

Committee: Senate Health

Youth Mental Health & Suicide Prevention

According to the latest Youth Risk Behavior Survey (CDC, 2017), in the year before the survey, **more than 1 in 4 (28.6%)** California high school students reported feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for 2 or more weeks in a row; **17%** seriously considered attempting suicide; **14.1%** reported making a plan about how they would attempt suicide; and **9.4%** attempted suicide one or more times.

AFSP advocates for state initiatives that encourage active and full implementation across the state and that implement a systematic approach to quality social services and mental health care in youth-focused settings. Timely access to quality behavioral health services and supports can improve youth mental health and wellbeing and save young lives.

Support SB 331 [Hurtado] – Youth Suicide Prevention Strategic Plans

The California Suicide Prevention Act of 2000 (Welfare and Institutions Code § 4098) authorizes the State Department of Health Care Services to establish and implement a suicide prevention program. **SB 331** would add a new section to this existing law to require counties to each create a suicide prevention strategic plan with an emphasis on preventing suicide among children and adolescents under age 19. Currently, only 7 of California's 58 counties have adopted such plans (Contra Costa, Fresno, San Diego, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, Tuolumne) and 2 additional counties (Marin, Santa Cruz) have recently convened work groups to develop such plans.

Coauthors: Asm. Levine & Sen. Beall -- Committee: Senate Health

Support SB 12 [Beall & Portantino] – Youth Mental Health Centers

SB 12 would create the Integrated Youth Mental Health Program to establish centers that provide integrated care services for youth and young adults ages 12-25 and their families. The Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission would oversee the program and develop the criteria and process for awarding funding to eligible counties, cities, or other local entities. The Commission would also establish core components of the program, such as:

- Youth-informed design for integrated youth mental health services;
- Supporting individuals with mental health needs, including mild to moderate mental health issues, anxiety, and depression;
- Access to integrated care services, including mental health, physical health, substance use, and educational, vocational, and peer support;
- Services that are affordable, destigmatizing, appealing to youth, and confidential;
- Staff that includes psychiatrists, psychologists, physicians, substance use treatment counselors, peer and family support, and others; and
- A focus on vulnerable and marginalized youth.

Coauthors: Sen. Hertzberg; Asm. Berman, Carrillo, Diep, Cristina Garcia, Eduardo Garcia, Lackey, Maienschein, Robert Rivas, Wicks -- Committee: Senate Health

THANK YOU: SB 972 – Student Identification Cards is now law

Last year's SB 972 [Portantino] will require, starting 7/1/19, schools that serve students in grades 7-12 and institutions of higher education to have the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline number (1-800-273-8255) printed on student identification cards, and allows for inclusion of the Crisis Text Line (text TALK to 741-741) and local crisis hotline numbers. The bill passed the State Senate and Assembly with unanimous support. AFSP extends our sincere gratitude and appreciation to Senator Portantino and the bill's coauthors, and to all legislators who voted YES for this important bill.