



March xx, 2020

The Honorable Toni Atkins
President pro Tempore
California State Senate

The Honorable Holly J. 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 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 to establish Youth Mental Health First Aid**, to be administered by the Department of Health Care Services.

The mental health and substance use crisis amongst adolescents is growing at alarming levels in California. Our teachers and school personnel are often on the front lines of this crisis. 30% of high school students in our state report experiencing depression symptoms - feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for 2 or more weeks in a row, so much so that they stopped doing some usual activities. 18% of high school students have seriously considered attempting suicide, and 8% attempted suicide one or more times in the past year.¹ Suicide is the second cause of death for youth 15 to 24 years old and the third leading cause of death among youth aged 10 to 14. In addition, marginalized populations, particularly LGBTQ youth, are at even greater risk.

Youth Mental Health First Aid is a 6-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:

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/index.htm>

- 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 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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Your organization's signature here

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