

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 1264

Introduced by Assembly Member Aguiar-Curry

February 19, 2021

An act to add and repeal Article 5.3 (commencing with Section 124000) of Chapter 3 of Part 2 of Division 106 of the Health and Safety Code, relating to public health.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1264, as introduced, Aguiar-Curry. Project ECHO (registered trademark) Grant Program.

Existing law establishes within state government the California Health and Human Services Agency. Existing law also establishes various public health programs, including grant programs, throughout the state for purposes of promoting maternal, child, and adolescent health.

This bill would require the agency, upon appropriation by the Legislature, to establish, develop, implement, and administer the Project ECHO (registered trademark) Grant Program. Under the grant program, the bill would require participating children's hospitals to establish yearlong pediatric behavioral health teleECHO (trademark) clinics for specified individuals, including primary care clinicians and educators, to help them develop expertise and tools to better serve the youth that they work with by addressing their mental health needs stemming from the coronavirus pandemic. The bill would require the agency to ensure that the grant program includes a maximum of 8 grants that support pediatric behavioral health teleECHO (trademark) clinics to be administered and operated by an eligible children's hospital, and that grant funding be made available, at a minimum, to participants for specified purposes, such as recruiting efforts and funding salaries and

fringe benefits for pediatric behavioral health teleECHO (trademark) clinic personnel. The bill would require a pediatric behavioral health teleECHO (trademark) clinic to target specified audiences, including school-based health care professionals who serve kindergarten and grades 1 to 12, inclusive, and would require a participant to perform prescribed duties, such as preparing a report that evaluates the grant program. The bill would repeal these provisions on January 1, 2027.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes. State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. (a) The Legislature finds and declares all of the
2 following:

3 (1) California is facing an unprecedented public health crisis as
4 a result of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

5 (2) Mental health experts agree that the impacts of the pandemic
6 and statewide stay-at-home orders will have long-lasting impacts
7 on the mental health of all Californians.

8 (3) A 2013 study from the University of Kentucky, College of
9 Medicine, found that almost one-third of children who experienced
10 isolation or quarantine during the 2002–04 severe acute respiratory
11 syndrome pandemic and the 2009 H1N1 flu pandemic
12 demonstrated symptoms that met the overall threshold for
13 post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and showed significantly
14 higher rates of PTSD symptoms of all kinds compared to children
15 who did not experience isolation or quarantine.

16 (4) The stay-at-home orders that have been issued across
17 California in response to the COVID-19 pandemic are of a much
18 longer duration, and more widespread, than those that were issued
19 during either of these previous pandemics, which suggests that the
20 negative impacts on children’s mental health will also be more
21 severe and widespread.

22 (5) School-based professionals and primary care clinicians are
23 in the best position to implement widespread interventions and
24 mental health supports for children, but many do not have the
25 training or expertise needed to address the mental health needs
26 that children will experience in the coming months and years.

27 (6) Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare
28 Outcomes) (registered trademark) is an innovative educational

1 model and knowledge-sharing network that allows specialists to
2 share their expertise with health care providers and educators in
3 rural and underserved communities. Project ECHO (registered
4 trademark) serves as a model to help pediatric and adolescent
5 mental health teams share their expertise with primary care
6 clinicians and school-based professionals who are on the front-line
7 for the purpose of supporting the mental health needs of children
8 and adolescents.

9 (7) This low-cost and high-impact intervention is accomplished
10 by linking expert interdisciplinary specialist teams with primary
11 care clinicians, other health care professionals, and educators
12 through pediatric behavioral health teleECHO (trademark) clinics.
13 Experts mentor the clinicians and professionals to help them
14 manage their patient cases, clients, and students, as appropriate,
15 and share their expertise through mentoring, guidance, feedback,
16 and didactic education. This enables primary care clinicians and
17 other professionals to develop the skills and knowledge they need
18 to treat their patients, clients, and students, as appropriate, with
19 common and complex conditions in their own communities thereby
20 reducing travel costs, wait times, and avoidable complications.

21 (8) The ECHO model (trademark) is not a form of telemedicine.
22 The specialist does not assume the care of the patient, client, or
23 student. Rather, the ECHO model (trademark) is a guided practice
24 model under which the primary care physician or school-based
25 professional retains responsibility for managing the patient, client,
26 or student, and the primary care physician or professional operates
27 with increasing independence as their skills and self-efficacy grow.

28 (b) For purposes of helping primary care clinicians, other health
29 care professionals, including school-based professionals, and
30 educators meet the mental health needs of children and adolescents
31 stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is the intent of the
32 Legislature to require the California Health and Human Services
33 Agency to establish, develop, implement, and administer a grant
34 program to fund a maximum of eight grants that support pediatric
35 behavioral health teleECHO (trademark) clinics to be administered
36 and operated by eligible children's hospitals.

37 SEC. 2. Article 5.3 (commencing with Section 124000) is
38 added to Chapter 3 of Part 2 of Division 106 of the Health and
39 Safety Code, to read:

1 Article 5.3. Project ECHO (registered trademark) Grant Program

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3 124000. For purposes of this article, the following definitions
4 apply:

5 (a) “Eligible children’s hospital” means any hospital that is
6 identified in Section 10727 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.

7 (b) “Grant program” means the grant program established under
8 this article.

9 (c) “Participant” means an applicant that has been approved to
10 implement the grant program.

11 124001. (a) (1) Upon appropriation by the Legislature for this
12 purpose, the California Health and Human Services Agency shall
13 establish, develop, implement, and administer the Project ECHO
14 (registered trademark) Grant Program. Under the grant program,
15 participating children’s hospitals shall establish yearlong pediatric
16 behavioral health teleECHO (trademark) clinics for primary care
17 clinicians, other health care professionals, including school-based
18 health professionals, and educators to help them develop expertise
19 and tools to better serve the children and adolescents that they
20 work with by addressing their mental health needs stemming from
21 the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

22 (2) The agency shall ensure that the grant program includes a
23 maximum of eight grants that support pediatric behavioral health
24 teleECHO (trademark) clinics to be administered and operated by
25 an eligible children’s hospital. Each one-time grant shall not exceed
26 two hundred twenty-five thousand dollars (\$225,000), and one
27 grant shall be available to each eligible children’s hospital to fund
28 a one yearlong project. If any funding is available following an
29 initial application period, the agency shall offer a secondary
30 application period to exhaust available funding, subject to the
31 funding limitations described in this paragraph.

32 (3) A participating children’s hospital shall consult with the
33 county behavioral health agencies in each county where its project
34 will be implemented to obtain information on appropriate referrals
35 to local public children’s behavioral health programs for the
36 purposes of providing this information to its project participants.

37 (b) The agency shall ensure that grant funding be made
38 available, at a minimum, to participants for all of the following
39 purposes:

40 (1) Planning and developing curriculum.

- 1 (2) Printing and duplication costs.
- 2 (3) Recruiting.
- 3 (4) Funding all of the following:
 - 4 (A) Salaries and fringe benefits for pediatric behavioral health
 - 5 teleECHO (trademark) clinic personnel.
 - 6 (B) Supplies and equipment, including capital and noncapital.
 - 7 (C) Travel costs associated with Replication Training at the
 - 8 ECHO (registered trademark) Institute and recruitment of pediatric
 - 9 behavioral health teleECHO (trademark) clinic participants.
 - 10 (D) Facilities and administrative fees.
 - 11 (E) Consultant fees.
- 12 (c) A pediatric behavioral health teleECHO (trademark) clinic
- 13 shall target one of the following audiences or a subset of that
- 14 audience:
 - 15 (1) Primary care providers.
 - 16 (2) School-based health care professionals who serve
 - 17 kindergarten and grades 1 to 12, inclusive.
 - 18 (3) School-based mental health professionals who serve
 - 19 kindergarten and grades 1 to 12, inclusive.
 - 20 (4) School administrators who serve kindergarten and grades 1
 - 21 to 12, inclusive.
 - 22 (5) Educators who serve kindergarten and grades 1 to 12,
 - 23 inclusive.
- 24 (d) Under the grant program, a participant shall perform
- 25 specified duties in furtherance of the legislative objectives of this
- 26 program, as directed by the agency. At a minimum, a participant
- 27 shall do all of the following:
 - 28 (1) Prioritize working with community providers and
 - 29 school-based professionals who predominantly serve low-income
 - 30 populations or those serving in rural or underserved areas of the
 - 31 state.
 - 32 (2) Adhere to the four principles of the ECHO (registered
 - 33 trademark) model in the pediatric behavioral health teleECHO
 - 34 (trademark) clinics, which includes all of the following:
 - 35 (A) Use technology to leverage scarce resources.
 - 36 (B) Share best practices to reduce disparity.
 - 37 (C) Employ case-based learning to master complexity.
 - 38 (D) Use an internet web-based database to monitor outcomes.

1 (3) Prepare a report evaluating the grant program upon the
2 conclusion of the one-year program, and submit that report to the
3 agency for review.
4 124002. This article shall remain in effect only until January
5 1, 2027, and as of that date is repealed.