

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 898

Introduced by Assembly Member Bryan

February 19, 2025

An act to amend Sections 16527 and 16529 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to child welfare.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 898, as introduced, Bryan. The Family Urgent Response System.

Existing law requires the State Department of Social Services to establish a statewide hotline as the entry point for the Family Urgent Response System, as defined, to respond to calls from caregivers or current or former foster children or youth during moments of instability, as specified. Existing law requires the hotline to include, among other things, referrals to a county-based mobile response system, as specified, for further support and in-person response. Existing law requires the department to collect deidentified, aggregated data, including the number of current and former foster children or youth served through the statewide hotline and the disposition of each call, and requires the department to publish a report on its internet website, as specified.

This bill would instead specify that the statewide hotline shall be the primary entry point for the Family Urgent Response System.

Existing law also requires county child welfare, probation, and behavioral health agencies, in each county or region of counties, as specified, to establish a joint county-based mobile response system that includes a mobile response and stabilization team for the purpose of providing supportive services to, among other things, address situations of instability, preserve the relationship of the caregiver and the child or youth, and stabilize the situation. Existing law requires county child

welfare, probation, and behavioral health agencies, in consultation with other relevant specified entities, to submit a single coordinated plan to the department describing how the county-based mobile response system meets the requirements described above.

This bill would require the plan to be revisited on a biennial basis. The bill would also authorize a county-based mobile response system that is not otherwise responding to calls placed through the statewide hotline to utilize mobile response team staff based on local needs, including by providing ongoing support to a child, youth, or caregiver who has received mobile response services. The bill would also require the county-based mobile response system to prioritize calls placed through the statewide hotline for urgent responses and maintain sufficient staffing to ensure county-based mobile response teams maintain compliance. By increasing the duties of county agencies, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to the statutory provisions noted above.

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

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

- 1 SECTION 1. Section 16527 of the Welfare and Institutions
- 2 Code is amended to read:
- 3 16527. (a) The department shall establish a statewide hotline
- 4 as the *primary* entry point for the Family Urgent Response System,
- 5 which shall be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to
- 6 respond to calls from a caregiver or current or former foster child
- 7 or youth during moments of instability. Both of the following shall
- 8 be available through this hotline:
- 9 (1) Hotline workers who are trained in techniques for
- 10 deescalation and conflict resolution telephone response specifically
- 11 for children or youth impacted by trauma.

1 (2) Referrals to a county-based mobile response system,
2 established pursuant to Section 16529, for further support and
3 in-person response. Referrals shall occur as follows:

4 (A) A warm handoff whereby the hotline worker establishes
5 direct and live connection through a three-way call that includes
6 the caregiver, child or youth, and county contact. The caregiver,
7 child, or youth may decline the three-way contact with the county
8 contact if they feel their situation has been resolved at the time of
9 the call.

10 (B) If a direct communication cannot be established pursuant
11 to subparagraph (A), a referral directly to the community- or
12 county-based service and a followup call to ensure that a
13 connection to the caregiver, child, or youth occurs.

14 (C) The hotline worker shall contact the caregiver and the child
15 or youth within 24 hours after the initial call required under
16 subparagraph (A) or (B) to offer additional support, if needed.

17 (b) The statewide hotline shall maintain contact information for
18 all county-based mobile response systems, based on information
19 provided by counties, for referrals to local services, including, but
20 not limited to, county-based mobile response and stabilization
21 teams.

22 (c) The department shall ensure that deidentified, aggregated
23 data are collected regarding individuals served through the
24 statewide hotline and county-based mobile response systems and
25 shall publish a report on the department's internet website by
26 January 1, 2022, and annually by January 1 thereafter, in
27 consultation with stakeholders, including, but not limited to, the
28 County Welfare Directors Association of California, the Chief
29 Probation Officers of California, and the County Behavioral Health
30 Directors Association of California. The data shall be collected
31 using automated procedures or other matching methods mutually
32 agreed upon by the state and county agencies, including, but not
33 limited to, the statewide child welfare automation management
34 system, and shall include all of the following information:

35 (1) The number of caregivers served through the hotline,
36 separated by placement type and status as a current or former foster
37 caregiver.

38 (2) The number of current and former foster children or youth
39 served through the hotline, separated by county agency type,

1 current or former foster care status, age, gender, race, and whether
2 the call was made by the caregiver or the child or youth.

3 (3) The disposition of each call, including, but not limited to,
4 whether mobile response and stabilization services were provided
5 or a referral was made to other services.

6 (4) County-based outcome data, including, but not limited to,
7 placement stability, return into foster care, movement from child
8 welfare to juvenile justice, and timeliness to permanency.

9 (d) The department may meet the requirements of this section
10 through contract with an entity with demonstrated experience in
11 working with populations of children or youth who have suffered
12 trauma and with capacity to provide a 24-hour-a-day,
13 seven-day-a-week response that includes mediation, relationship
14 preservation for the caregiver and the child or youth, and a
15 family-centered and developmentally appropriate approach with
16 the caregiver and the child or youth.

17 (e) The department, in consultation with stakeholders, including
18 current and former foster youth and caregivers, shall do all of the
19 following:

20 (1) Develop methods and materials for informing all caregivers
21 and current or former foster children or youth about the statewide
22 hotline, including a dissemination plan for those materials, which
23 shall include, at a minimum, making those materials publicly
24 available through the department's internet website.

25 (2) Establish protocols for triage and response.

26 (3) Establish minimum education and training requirements for
27 hotline workers.

28 (4) Consider expanding the statewide hotline to include
29 communication through electronic means, including, but not limited
30 to, text messaging or email.

31 (f) (1) The statewide hotline shall be operational no sooner than
32 January 1, 2021, and on the same date as the county mobile
33 response system created pursuant to this chapter.

34 (2) Notwithstanding paragraph (1), the statewide hotline may
35 operate sooner than January 1, 2021, or prior to the date that each
36 county has created a county mobile response system, upon
37 notification from each county to the department that the county
38 satisfies one of the following requirements:

39 (A) Has established a county mobile response system created
40 pursuant to this chapter.

1 (B) Has an alternative method to accept and respond to referrals
2 from the statewide hotline pending the establishment of the county
3 mobile response system.

4 (g) The department shall assist, as needed, the State Department
5 of Health Care Services in exercising its authority pursuant to
6 subdivision (b) of Section 16528.

7 SEC. 2. Section 16529 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is
8 amended to read:

9 16529. (a) County child welfare, probation, and behavioral
10 health agencies, in each county or region of counties as specified
11 in subdivision ~~(e)~~, (f), shall establish a joint county-based mobile
12 response system that includes a mobile response and stabilization
13 team for the purpose of providing supportive services to address
14 situations of instability, preserve the relationship of the caregiver
15 and the child or youth, develop healthy conflict resolution and
16 relationship skills, promote healing as a family, and stabilize the
17 situation.

18 (b) In each county or region of counties, the county child
19 welfare, probation, and behavioral health agencies, in consultation
20 with other relevant county agencies, tribal representatives,
21 caregivers, and current or former foster children or youth, shall
22 submit a single, coordinated plan to the department that describes
23 how the county-based mobile response system shall meet the
24 requirements described in subdivision (c). *This plan shall be*
25 *revisited on a biennial basis.* The plan shall also describe all of
26 the following:

27 (1) How the county, or region of counties, will track and monitor
28 calls.

29 (2) Data collection efforts, consistent with guidance provided
30 by the department, including, at a minimum, collection of data
31 necessary for the report required pursuant to subdivision (c) of
32 Section 16527.

33 (3) Transitions from mobile response and stabilization services
34 to ongoing services.

35 (4) A process for identifying if the child or youth has an existing
36 child and family team for coordinating with the child and family
37 team to address the instability, and a plan for ongoing care to
38 support that relationship in a trusting and healing environment.

39 (5) A process and criteria for determining response.

1 (6) The composition of the responders, including efforts to
2 include peer partners and those with lived experience in the
3 response team, whenever possible.

4 (7) Both existing and new services that will be used to support
5 the mobile response and stabilization services. County behavioral
6 health departments that operate mobile crisis units may share
7 resources between mobile crisis units and the mobile response
8 system required pursuant to this chapter, at their discretion.

9 (8) Response protocols for the child or youth in family-based
10 and congregate care settings based on guidelines developed by the
11 department, in consultation with stakeholders, pursuant to Section
12 16528. The response protocols shall ensure protections for children
13 and youth to prevent placements into congregate care settings,
14 psychiatric institutions, and hospital settings.

15 (9) A process for identifying whether the child or youth has an
16 existing behavioral health treatment plan and a placement
17 preservation strategy, as described in Section 16010.7, and for
18 coordinating response and services consistent with the plan and
19 strategy.

20 (10) A plan for the mobile response and stabilization team to
21 provide supportive services in the least intrusive and most child,
22 youth, and family friendly manner, such that mobile response and
23 stabilization teams do not trigger further trauma to the child or
24 youth.

25 (c) A county-based mobile response system shall include all of
26 the following:

27 (1) Phone response at the county level that facilitates entry of
28 the caregivers and current or former foster children or youth into
29 mobile response services.

30 (2) A process for determining when a mobile response and
31 stabilization team will be sent, or when other services will be used,
32 based on the urgent and critical needs of the caregiver, child, or
33 youth.

34 (3) A mobile response and stabilization team available 24 hours
35 a day, seven days a week.

36 (4) Ability to provide immediate, in-person, face-to-face
37 response preferably within one hour, but not to exceed 3 hours in
38 extenuating circumstances for urgent needs, or same-day response
39 within 24 hours for nonurgent situations.

1 (5) Utilization of individuals with specialized training in trauma
2 of children or youth and the foster care system on the mobile
3 response and stabilization team. Efforts should be made to include
4 peer partners and those with lived experience in the response team,
5 whenever possible.

6 (6) Provision of in-home deescalation, stabilization, and support
7 services and supports, including all of the following:

8 (A) Establishing in-person, face-to-face contact with the child
9 or youth and caregiver.

10 (B) Identifying the underlying causes of, and precursors to, the
11 situation that led to the instability.

12 (C) Identifying the caregiver interventions attempted.

13 (D) Observing the child and caregiver interaction.

14 (E) Diffusing the immediate situation.

15 (F) Coaching and working with the caregiver and the child or
16 youth in order to preserve the family unit and maintain the current
17 living situation or create a healthy transition plan, if necessary.

18 (G) Establishing connections to other county- or
19 community-based supports and services to ensure continuity of
20 care, including, but not limited to, linkage to additional
21 trauma-informed and culturally and linguistically responsive family
22 supportive services and youth and family wellness resources.

23 (H) Following up after the initial face-to-face response, for up
24 to 72 hours, to determine if additional supports or services are
25 needed.

26 (I) Identifying any additional support or ongoing stabilization
27 needs for the family and making a plan for, or referral to,
28 appropriate youth and family supportive services within the county.

29 (7) A process for communicating with the county of jurisdiction
30 and the county behavioral health ~~agency~~ *agency, as applicable*,
31 regarding the service needs of the child or youth and caregiver
32 provided that the child or youth is currently under the jurisdiction
33 of either the county child welfare or the probation system.

34 (d) County-based mobile response systems may be temporarily
35 adapted to address circumstances associated with COVID-19,
36 consistent with the Governor's Proclamation of a State of
37 Emergency, issued on March 4, 2020.

38 (e) (1) *A county-based mobile response system that is not*
39 *otherwise responding to calls placed through the statewide hotline*

1 *may utilize mobile response team staff based on local needs,*
2 *including, but not limited to, any of the following:*

3 *(A) Engaging in in-person education and outreach.*

4 *(B) Responding to local child, youth, or caregiver requests for*
5 *support.*

6 *(C) Providing ongoing support to a child, youth, or caregiver*
7 *who has received mobile response services.*

8 *(D) Responding to calls from children and families during a*
9 *hotline investigation or who are receiving family preservation or*
10 *voluntary or court-ordered family maintenance services.*

11 *(2) The county-based mobile response system shall prioritize*
12 *calls placed through the statewide hotline for urgent responses*
13 *and shall maintain sufficient staffing to ensure county-based mobile*
14 *response teams maintain compliance with all requirements set*
15 *forth in subdivision (c).*

16 ~~(e)~~

17 *(f) (1) Each county shall establish a mobile response system*
18 *no sooner than January 1, 2021, and on the same date as the*
19 *statewide hotline created under this chapter.*

20 *(2) Notwithstanding paragraph (1), a county may establish a*
21 *mobile response system, or an alternative method to accept and*
22 *respond to referrals from the statewide hotline, pending the*
23 *establishment of the county mobile response system, prior to*
24 *January 1, 2021, in order to facilitate the early operation of the*
25 *statewide hotline.*

26 *(3) The county agencies described in subdivisions (a) and (b)*
27 *may implement this section on a per-county basis or by*
28 *collaborating with other counties to establish regional, cross-county*
29 *mobile response systems. For counties implementing this section*
30 *pursuant to a regional approach, a single plan, as described in*
31 *subdivision (b), signed by all agency representatives, shall be*
32 *submitted to the department and a lead county shall be identified.*

33 *(4) Funds expended pursuant to this act shall be used to*
34 *supplement, and not supplant, other existing funding for mobile*
35 *response services described in this chapter.*

36 *(5) A county or region of counties may receive an extension,*
37 *not to exceed six months, to implement a mobile response system*
38 *after January 1, 2021, upon submission of a written request, in a*
39 *manner to be prescribed by the department, that includes a*
40 *demonstration of actions to implement, progress towards*

1 implementation, and the county's alternative method to accept and
2 respond to referrals from the statewide hotline pending the
3 establishment of the county mobile response system.

4 ~~(f)~~

5 (g) The creation and implementation of the Family Urgent
6 Response System shall not infringe on entitlements or services
7 provided pursuant to Title IV-E of the federal Social Security Act
8 (42 U.S.C. Sec. 670 et seq.) or the federal Early and Periodic
9 Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment services (42 U.S.C. Sec.
10 1396d(r)).

11 ~~(g)~~

12 (h) The department, in collaboration with the County Welfare
13 Directors Association of California, the County Behavioral Health
14 Directors Association of California, and the Chief Probation
15 Officers of California, on an annual basis beginning on January
16 1, 2022, shall assess utilization and workload associated with
17 implementation of the statewide hotline and mobile response and
18 provide an update to the Legislature during budget hearings.

19 SEC. 3. If the Commission on State Mandates determines that
20 this act contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to
21 local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made
22 pursuant to Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division
23 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code.