
SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Senator Nancy Skinner, Chair
2019 - 2020 Regular

Bill No: AB 656 **Hearing Date:** July 9, 2019
Author: Eduardo Garcia
Version: June 27, 2019
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: JK

Subject: *Office of Healthy and Safe Communities*

HISTORY

Source: The Alliance for Boys and Men of Color

Prior Legislation: AB 97 (Ting), the Budget Act of 2017
SB 934 (Allen), 2018, failed passage in Senate Appropriations

Support: California Pan-Ethnic Health Network; California Partnership to End Domestic Violence; California Peace Alliance/ Department of Peacebuilding Campaign; City of Sacramento; Community Coalition; Community Health Councils; Fathers & Families of San Joaquin; Flourish Agenda; Future Without Violence; Greenlining Institute; Human Impact Partners; Latino Coalition for a Healthy California; LIVE FREE; Los Angeles County Democratic Party; Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust; MILPA; National Center for Youth Law; PICO California; Prevention Institute; Public Health Advocates; Urban Peace Institute; Youth Leadership Institute

Opposition: None known

Assembly Floor Vote: 60 - 13

PURPOSE

The purpose of this bill is to establish the Office of Healthy and Safe Communities, under the direction of the State Department of Public Health, which would provide a comprehensive violence prevention strategy and expand access to community-based programs for Californians who are at risk for involvement in violence.

Existing law declares the Office of Emergency Services as the appropriate state agency to contract for programs addressing the root causes of violence. (Pen. Code § 14111.)

Existing law declares legislative intent to be the following:

- 1) To develop community violence prevention and conflict resolution programs, in the state, based upon the recommendations of the California Commission on Crime Control and Violence Prevention, that would present a balanced, comprehensive educational, intellectual, and experiential approach toward eradicating violence in our society; and,

- 2) That these programs shall be regulated, and funded pursuant to contracts with the Office of Emergency Services. (Pen Code § 14112.)

Existing law states that first priority shall be given to programs that provide community education, outreach, and coordination, and include creative and effective ways to translate the recommendations of the California Commission on Crime Control and Violence Prevention into practical use in one or more of the following subject areas:

- 1) Parenting, birthing, early childhood development, self-esteem, and family violence, to include child, spousal, and elderly abuse;
- 2) Economic factors and institutional racism;
- 3) Schools and educational factors;
- 4) Alcohol, diet, drugs, and other biochemical and biological factors;
- 5) Conflict resolution; and,
- 6) The media. (Pen. Code § 14114, subd. (a).)

Existing law states that first priority programs may additionally provide specific direct services or contract for those services in one or more of the program areas as necessary to carry out the recommendations of the commission when those services are not otherwise available in the community and existing agencies do not furnish them. (Pen. Code, § 14115.)

Existing law requires OES to promote, organize, and conduct a series of one-day crime and violence prevention training workshops around the state, as specified. (Pen. Code § 14119.)

This bill states the intent of the Legislature to enact the Office of Healthy and Safe Communities, under the direction of the State Department of Public Health, to provide a comprehensive violence prevention strategy and to promote and expand the use of, and access to, community-based programs for Californians who are exposed to, involved with, or at risk for involvement in violence. It is the further intent of the Legislature to direct this office to consolidate and administer various violence prevention grant programs and promote the creation of alternatives to incarceration.

This bill creates the Office of Healthy and Safe Communities (OHSC).

This bill declares that the Governor shall appoint the Director of the OHSC.

- 1) The Director of the OHSC shall perform all the following duties:
 - a) Hire and manage a staff team and consultants to execute the duties of the OHSC.
 - b) Assemble an advisory committee.
 - c) Develop, implement, and monitor a California vision and plan for violence prevention, safety, and healing with clear systems change goals aligned with funding to drive population-level results for decreasing exposure to violence

among California's most vulnerable people and places, including all of the following activities:

- i. Connect the vision and plan described in this paragraph to the Governor's strategies for youth development, criminal and juvenile justice reform, health care services, and other related areas of opportunity.
 - ii. Develop a strategy and plan for the consolidation, coordination, or alignment of funding for violence intervention and prevention programming.
 - iii. Identify and integrate trauma-centered diagnostic tools, such as early and periodic screening, diagnosis, and treatment services, to support violence prevention, intervention, and healing.
 - iv. Create an interactive community engagement strategy that prioritizes the voices of people directly impacted and doing the work to prevent violence and promote peace and healing in communities.
- d) Create a learning community of practice that includes community meetings and the sharing of promising practices, research, data, and innovative approaches to violence intervention and prevention throughout California, including both of the following activities:
- i. Supporting coordination and sharing among counties and cities that are advancing a violence prevention strategy.
 - ii. Tracking and monitoring data and research on violence statewide and in communities throughout California.
- e) Strengthen the professionalization of community violence intervention and prevention as a licensed occupation.
- f) Facilitate the coordination and alignment of programming across statewide departments and agencies, such as the State Department of Public Health, the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, the Department of Housing and Community Development, and the State Department of Education, with the potential to support violence intervention and prevention goals utilizing a social determinants of health orientation program that is inclusive of those who are exposed to violence, who have caused harm, and who have been harmed.

This bill states that the Director of the OHSC shall establish an advisory committee to inform and guide the execution of the duties of the OHSC. The President pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the Assembly shall jointly appoint the membership of the advisory committee and shall do so in a manner that reflects the diversity of California and the complexity of violence. The advisory committee shall be comprised of the following persons:

- 1) Three representatives from communities heavily impacted by violence.
- 2) One representative from the Strategic Growth Council.

- 3) One representative from the State Department of Public Health Office of Health Equity.
- 4) One representative from the California State University or University of California systems.
- 5) Three representatives from community organizations working to promote healing and peace.
- 6) Three representatives from local governments advancing violence prevention strategies.
- 7) Two representatives from advocacy organizations advancing prevention, healing, and peace.
- 8) The director shall serve as a member of the advisory panel.

This bill states this chapter shall be implemented by the State Department of Public Health only if appropriate funding, as determined by the department, is made available to the department upon appropriation by the Legislature or other sources for the purpose of implementing this chapter.

COMMENTS

1. Need for This Bill

According to the author:

California is drastically behind when it comes to assigning public funding to effective evidence-based solutions to address violence. Additionally, the funds that do exist along with the current policies respond to violence primarily through the criminal legal and child welfare systems in a reactionary fashion, rather than a preventative one.

2. Department of Public Health Violence Prevention Initiative (VPI)

According to DPH, it assembled an internal task force to focus on violence as a public health risk and explore and clarify the role and contribution of governmental public health in preventing violence in all its forms. This resulted in the establishment of the VPI. The goal of the VPI is to reduce violence and create safer and healthier communities for all Californians, with the purpose of elevating violence as a priority, integrating and aligning efforts across multiple DPH programs, and framing the public health role in addressing violence.

AB 656 also aims to establish a violence prevention driven office within the Department of Public Health.

3. California Violence Intervention and Prevention (CalVIP) Grant Program

From 2007 to 2017, California's budget acts appropriated \$9.215 million per year to operate the California Gang Reduction, Intervention and Prevention (CalGRIP) program, which provided matching grants to cities for initiatives to reduce youth-and gang-related crime. The budget acts between 2007 and 2017 guaranteed \$1 million annually for the City of Los Angeles, with the

remainder distributed to other cities of all sizes through a competitive application process, overseen by BSCC. In the 2017 Budget Act, the CalGRIP program, which was restructured to CalVIP, shifted the program away from initiatives targeting gang crime and affiliation toward a narrower and more objective focus on evidence-based violence prevention programs.

CalVIP funds may be used for violence intervention and prevention activities, with preference given to applicants that propose programs that have been shown to be the most effective at reducing violence. Preference was also given to applicants in cities or regions disproportionately affected by violence. City grantees must establish a coordinating and advisory council to prioritize the use of the funds and commit to collaborating with other jurisdictions and agencies with the goal of reducing violence in the city and adjacent areas. The maximum grant provided is \$500,000, and at least two will be awarded to cities with populations less than 200,000 people. At least 20% of funds a city receives must go to community-based organizations. Cities must match 100% of the grant money received

Funding for 2019-20 is \$30 million with \$3 million for competitive grants to cities with populations of 40,000 or less and \$1 million set-aside for the City of Los Angeles. From 2020-21 onwards, funding is slated to be \$9 million with \$1 million set-aside for Los Angeles. The California Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) will produce a Legislative Report on this program in March 2020.

This bill will also allocate grant funding to violence prevention community based organizations.

4. Related Legislation

AB 1603 (Wicks) codifies the CalVIP Program. AB 1603 passed the Senate Public Safety Committee by a vote of 7-0 on June 25, 2019.

5. Argument in Support

According to Public Health Advocates:

The OHSC will seek to outline a vision for healing, justice, safety and peace that utilizes the research and evidence from the fields of human and youth development, public health, and community building. Practices that are trauma-informed, culturally appropriate, community centered, and utilize a social determinants of health framework that acknowledges generational trauma, the legacy of sexism, racism, and colonialism is the most effective way to reduce and end violence and promote peace, healing, and safety.

In order for California to stop cycles of violence, a prevention-oriented approach with inter-connected and coordinated strategies, and equitable funding for individuals and communities with the greatest need is required. Public Health Advocates co-sponsors and strongly supports the enactment of AB 656 and we respectfully ask for your support.

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