
SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Senator Aisha Wahab, Chair

2023 - 2024 Regular

Bill No: AB 912 **Hearing Date:** June 20, 2023
Author: Jones-Sawyer
Version: May 18, 2023
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: SJ

Subject: *Strategic Anti-Violence Funding Efforts Act*

HISTORY

Source: Author

Prior Legislation: AB 1454 (Jones-Sawyer), Ch. 584, Stats. 2019
AB 1812 (Jones-Sawyer), Ch. 36, Stats. 2018

Support: California Alliance of Caregivers; California Children’s Trust; California Faculty Association; California Health+Advocates; California Public Defenders Association; California School-Age Consortium; California School-Based Health Alliance; Californians United for a Responsible Budget; Children Now; Community Works; Equality California; ExpandLA; Fresh Lifelines for Youth; Friends Committee on Legislation of California; Haywood Burns Institute; Los Angeles Unified School District; March for Our Lives Action Fund; National Association of Social Workers, California Chapter; National Center for Lesbian Rights; Rising Communities; Sister Warriors Freedom Coalition; Starting Over; T.H.E. Health and Wellness Centers; Women’s Foundation California; Young Women’s Freedom Center; Youth Alliance

Opposition: None known

Assembly Floor Vote: 77 - 0

PURPOSE

The purpose of this bill is to re-establish the Youth Reinvestment Grant Program to be administered by the Office of Youth and Community Restoration and revise components of the program, establish the Violence Reduction Grant Program to be administered by the Department of Justice, and create additional grant programs designed to improve the health and well-being of youth.

Existing law establishes the Youth Reinvestment Grant (YRG) Program within the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) for the purpose of granting funds, as specified. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 1450.)

Existing law requires that 3 percent of funds for the YRG be allocated to Indian tribes for the purpose of implementing diversion programs for Indian children that use trauma-informed, community-based, and health-based interventions. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 1453, subd. (a).)

Existing law requires that priority be given to diversion programs addressing the needs of Indian children who experience high rates of juvenile arrest, suicide, alcohol and substance abuse, and average high school graduation rates lower than 75 percent. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 1453, subd. (b).)

Existing law requires YRG funds to be allocated by the BSCC through a competitive grant process for the purpose of implementing trauma-informed diversion programs for youth. Provides that grants be awarded to a local governmental entity or nonprofit organization for no less \$50,000 and no more than \$2 million. Requires an applicant to provide at least a 25-percent cash or in-kind match to the grant, except as provided. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 1458, subs. (a) & (b).)

Existing law requires ninety percent of YRG funds awarded to a local government entity to pass through to community-based organizations to deliver services in underserved communities with high rates of youth arrests. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 1458, subd. (b)(3).)

Existing law requires services offered to youth be community based, evidence based, culturally relevant, and developmentally appropriate. Requires services to be located in communities of local jurisdictions with the high needs. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 1458, subd. (b)(4).)

Existing law provides that the BSCC is responsible for oversight and accountability of the YRG, including supporting grantee data collection, contracting with a research firm or university to conduct a statewide evaluation of the grant program, and assisting the research firm or university by providing relevant, existing data for the purposes of tracking outcomes. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 1459.)

Existing law establishes the Office of Youth and Community Restoration (OYCR) in the California Health and Human Services Agency with a mission to promote trauma responsive, culturally informed services for youth involved in the juvenile justice system that support their successful transition to adulthood and help them become responsible, thriving, and engaged members of the community. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 2200, subs. (a) & (b).)

Existing law moves all juvenile justice grant administration functions in the BSCC to the OYCR no later than January 1, 2025. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 2200, subd. (h).)

This bill re-establishes the YRG program, makes changes to the existing grant program, and designates the OYCR to administer it.

This bill requires YRG funds to be allocated as follows:

- Three percent for administrative costs.
- \$500,000 for evaluation of the grant program.
- \$500,000 for technical assistance to grantees.
- Ten percent for Native American youth diversion programs.
- All remaining funds to be used for youth diversion programs.

This bill includes the following definitions:

- “Applicant” and “grantee” mean an eligible tribal government, tribal organization, or a nonprofit community-based organization that meets specified requirements.

- “Area of high need” means either of the following: a city or a ZIP Code with rates of youth arrests that are higher than the county average, based on available arrest data; or a city or a ZIP Code with racial or ethnic disparities in youth arrests that are higher than their representation in the county population, as described by the applicant.
- “Diversion” means a nonpunitive response to address a youth’s conduct without involving a youth formally in the juvenile justice system.
- “Diversion program” means a program that promotes positive youth development by relying on responses that prevent a youth’s involvement or further involvement in the justice system.
- “Mixed-delivery system” means a system of adolescent development and education support services delivered through a combination of programs, providers, and settings that include partnerships between community-based nonprofit organizations and public agencies and that is supported with a combination of public and private funds.
- “Referring agency” means organizations or agencies that may refer youth to diversion programs, including, but not limited to, education, law enforcement, child welfare, behavioral health, and public health entities.
- “Trauma-informed” means an approach that involves an understanding of adverse childhood experiences and responding to symptoms of chronic interpersonal trauma and traumatic stress across the lifespan of an individual.
- “Youth” means a person who is subject to the jurisdiction of the juvenile court.

This bill requires that OYCR allocate YRG funds through a three-year competitive grant program for the purpose of implementing a mixed-delivery system of trauma-informed health and development diversion programs for youth.

This bill outlines eligibility criteria to receive YRG funding, as specified.

This bill requires grants awarded to be no less than \$50,000 and no more than \$2,000,000.

This bill requires diversion services to be provided in communities described as areas with high needs. Requires services to be evidence based, trauma informed, culturally relevant, gender responsive, and developmentally appropriate.

This bill requires applicants to have experience effectively serving populations of youth who are juvenile justice system-involved or at-risk of system involvement. Requires priority be given to organizations that employ people with lived experience as a youth in the juvenile justice system.

This bill requires that diversion programs include alternatives to arrest, incarceration, and formal involvement with the justice system with priority given to programs that divert youth at the earliest possible point of involvement. Requires diversion programs to also include one or more of the following: educational services; career development services; mentoring services; behavioral health services, including substance use treatment; mental health services; housing services; personal development and leadership training services; or prosocial activities.

This bill provides that the OYCR is responsible for the administration, oversight, and compliance of the YRG. Requires the OYCR to support grantee data collection and analysis, contract with a research firm or university to conduct a statewide evaluation of the program, and contract with a technical assistance provider to support implementation of the program and to build capacity of grantee organizations. Specifies that \$500,000 must be set aside to contract with the researcher for evaluation and \$500,000 must be set aside to contract with the technical assistance provider.

This bill establishes a grant program, contingent on an appropriation, to be administered by the Department of Justice (DOJ) for the purpose of improving public safety and community health and well-being with a focus on communities that are impacted by violence and gang involvement.

This bill requires grants awarded to be used to support, expand, and replicate evidence-based, focused-deterrence collaborative programs that conduct outreach to targeted gangs and offer supportive services in order to preemptively reduce and eliminate violence and gang involvement. Requires the supportive services to include job training, health care, and crisis response to shootings and violence, among other services. Requires DOJ to give priority for funding to schools, community-based organizations, and nonprofit organizations.

This bill requires grants to be awarded on a competitive basis with preference to cities and local jurisdictions that are disproportionately impacted by violence and gang involvement.

This bill outlines the requirements for a grant application. Requires DOJ to give preference to applicants whose grant proposals demonstrate the greatest likelihood of reducing the incidence of violence and gang involvement in the applicant's community, without contributing to mass incarceration.

This bill requires each city and other local jurisdiction that receives a grant to distribute no less than 50 percent of the grant funds to one or both of the following: community-based organizations, or public agencies or departments that are primarily dedicated to community safety or violence prevention.

This bill authorizes DOJ to use up to 7 percent of the funds appropriated for the program each year for the costs of administering the program.

This bill specifies other program requirements.

This bill requires the California Health and Human Services Agency, contingent on an appropriation, to administer a grant program to provide funding to local educational agencies, including charter schools, to implement evidence-based interventions for pupils impacted by trauma, and to an organization to study specified pupil outcomes, for the improvement in the health and well-being of the youth and school and community stability. Requires the agency to develop an application process and criteria for funding, evaluate those applications, and develop a list of evidence-based interventions that local educational agencies receiving grants may implement, among other things.

This bill renames the Public School Health Center Support Program to the School-Based Health Center Support Program and makes numerous changes to the program, including its grant program.

This bill establishes a grant program to be administered by the Department of Parks and Recreation, contingent on an appropriation, for the purpose of awarding grants to local governments and community-based organizations to support existing and create new parks and recreation opportunities in order to create and enhance recreation- and health-based interventions for youth during peak times of violence. Outlines requirements in developing and implementing the grant program.

This bill includes legislative findings and declarations.

COMMENTS

1. Need for This Bill

According to the author:

By advancing sensible legislation and budget items to improve public safety and advance justice and equity, the State Legislature has decreased the number of incarcerated people in California. As a result, the LAO estimates \$235 million annual cost savings associated with two recent prison closures. It is imperative that the resulting savings be reinvested into effective strategies proven to further reduce crime and violence. AB 912, the SAFE Act, will capture the savings from the closure of two prisons in the 2023-24 state budget and reinvest those funds in programs with proven success. By keeping the funding within our crime prevention budget rather than sending it back to the General Fund, we send a message that our efforts to reduce crime are continuous and we provide much needed resources for some outstanding programs. As such, the SAFE Act, specifically, will extend funding for the Youth Reinvestment Grant Program; reduce gang violence and gang involvement through programs modeled after successful ones, such as Oakland Ceasefire; expand early trauma-informed intervention programs to school-aged kids; increase access to physical and mental health services for K-12 students through school-based health centers; and, support parks and recreation opportunities, including summer youth leagues and extended programming.

2. Violence as a Public Health Issue

In recent decades, violence has come to be widely been recognized as a public health issue. Societal changes in the second half of the twentieth century, including evolving views regarding child abuse and intimate partner violence, increased rates of homicide and suicide, and acceptance among public health researchers and practitioners regarding the significance of causal or preventative links between behavioral factors and disease led to widespread recognition and acceptance of addressing violence from a public health approach. (Dahlberg and Mercy, *History of Violence as a Public Health Problem* (2009) American Medical Association (AMA) Journal of Ethics available at <<https://journalofethics.ama-assn.org/article/history-violence-public-health-problem/2009-02>>.) Violence has been described as a contagious and epidemic disease, and public health methods have been employed across the country to stop the spread of various types of violence. (Slutkin, MD, *How the Health Sector Can Reduce Violence by Treating It as a Contagion* (2018) AMA Journal of Ethics available at <<https://journalofethics.ama-assn.org/article/how-health-sector-can-reduce-violence-treating-it-contagion/2018-01>>.)

This bill creates grant programs, each subject to an appropriation, which use a public health approach to reduce violence and trauma among young people. Those grant programs will be review when the Senate Health Committee hears this bill.

3. Youth Reinvestment Grant Program

The Youth Reinvestment Grant (YRG) program was established in the 2018 Budget Act and a related trailer bill. The YRG program is aimed at diverting low-level offenders from initial

contact with the juvenile justice system using approaches that are evidence-based, culturally relevant, trauma-informed, and developmentally appropriate. When initially created, only California cities and counties were eligible to apply for grants. The applicant was required to designate a “lead public agency,” such as the applicant city or county, or a department or agency within the applicant’s jurisdiction, to receive 10% the funds and to coordinate with local law enforcement agencies, social service agencies, and nonprofit organizations to implement the local grant program. Applicants were required to pass through the remaining 90% of awarded funds to community-based organizations to deliver diversion programs to minors. (BSCC, *Youth Reinvestment Grant Frequently Asked Questions* <<http://www.bscc.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/YRG-FAQ-POSTED-3.5.19.pdf>> [as of Jun. 13, 2023].)

AB 1454 (Jones-Sawyer, Chapter 584, Statutes 2019) revised the program to allow a non-profit organization to apply directly for a grant through the YRG program and increased the maximum grant amount from \$1,000,000 to \$2,000,000. Examples of funded programs include a range of after-school and mentoring programs and a program that provides services to at-risk or justice-involved youth (such as a late-night sports league, case management, and mentorship).

All juvenile justice grant administration functions in the BSCC are required to move to the OYCR no later than January 1, 2025. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 2200, subd. (h).) This bill re-establishes the YRG program, designates the OYCR as the administrator of the program, and makes some changes to the existing grant program.

4. Violence Reduction Grant Program

In addition to the other grant programs created by this bill, this bill establishes a competitive grant program within DOJ to improve public safety and community health and well-being especially in communities impacted by violence and gang involvement. This bill requires grants awarded to be used to support, expand, and replicate evidence-based, focused-deterrence collaborative programs that conduct outreach to targeted gangs and offer supportive services in order to preemptively reduce and eliminate violence and gang involvement. This bill requires that the supportive services offered include job training, health care, and crisis response to shootings and violence, among other services. Schools, community-based organizations, and nonprofit organizations would be given preference for funding via the program but cities and local jurisdictions are also eligible to apply for grants.

This bill requires DOJ to give preference to applicants whose grant proposals demonstrate the greatest likelihood of reducing the incidence of violence and gang involvement in the applicant’s community, without contributing to mass incarceration. A city or local jurisdiction that receives a grant would be required to distribute at least 50 percent of the grant funds to at least one community-based organization or public agency that is primarily dedicated to community safety or violence prevention.

5. Argument in Support

The National Association of Social Workers – California Chapter writes:

This comprehensive measure reinvests cost savings, upon appropriation from the Legislature, from prison closures into programs that reduce violence, provide diversion opportunities, and deliver critical community supports, including mental health, education and vocational services.

On December 6, 2022, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation announced the closure and exiting of contract for two additional prison facilities. With the closure of these facilities, the Legislative Analyst's Office estimates a cost savings of \$235.3 million annually. Rather than returning to the General Fund, it is imperative these savings are kept within the Legislature's crime prevention budget and reinvested into effective strategies proven to further reduce crime and violence.

Studies have shown health-based approaches have been successful in curbing violence through applied, skill-based prevention programs. Addressing youth mental health and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) is crucial in mitigating long-term effects, such as substance abuse, mental illness, chronic health problems, and criminality. Existing programs have been successful in providing crucial resources and early intervention to youth.

The SAFE Act calls for the reallocation of the \$235 million in annual savings from the proposed closure of two prisons in the 2023-24 state budget. Those funds will go to the following programs:

- Relocate the Youth Reinvestment Grant Program from the Board of State and Community Corrections to the Office of Youth and Community Restoration. Grants are available for local jurisdictions and California tribes for trauma-informed diversion programs for minors.
- Support programs that reduce gang violence and gang involvement, modeled after successful programs like Ceasefire in Oakland that resulted in a 43% reduction in homicides and a 50% reduction in non-fatal shootings.
- Increase access to physical and mental health services for children through school-based health centers, located on school sites.
- Expand early trauma-informed intervention programs for school-aged children experiencing extreme traumatic events in order to support their health, well-being and community stability.
- Provide grants to local governments and community-based organizations to create new parks and fund recreation and health-based opportunities during peak times of violence.

-- END --