

State of California

EDUCATION CODE

Section 8801

8801. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) A large and growing number of California's children are not learning enough in school to prepare them for full economic, social, and civic participation in adult life, as evidenced by the following statistics:

(1) Each year, between 59,000 and 72,000 children are born exposed to drugs or alcohol.

(2) Currently 360,000 children are abused or neglected, according to the juvenile courts and county welfare departments.

(3) Each year, a substantial number of parents have their parental rights terminated by the courts.

(4) Seventy thousand children are presently placed with foster care because of parental abuse or neglect or delinquent behavior.

(5) Out of an average class of 30 high school sophomores, any eight pupils are on public assistance, any four speak no English, any eight are at least two years behind in reading and math, any three have grown up in public housing, any seven will not graduate, any three will be teen parents, and any seven will not be employable.

(6) Sixty-one thousand children receive mental health services annually.

(7) One million one hundred thousand children go to bed hungry every night.

(b) The quality of life for all Californians is affected by these conditions. These children, and often the children they have, impose heavy costs on taxpayers by requiring special services, income assistance, or incarceration or institutionalization. They are a burden on the capacity of the state's economy to produce adequate revenues and an adequate tax base.

(c) The causes of the problems children face are complex and interdependent. Many families, especially those affected by poverty, fail to provide the physical, emotional, and intellectual support needed to ensure that their children are ready for school. Many neighborhoods and larger communities lack the resources or organization to support children. The schools' support services either are not effective or have not effectively serviced a large enough percentage of at-risk children.

(d) Because children spend so much of their time at school, schools have been increasingly asked to provide a wide range of health and social services to children, and many have attempted to help parents as well. The capacity of schools to undertake these roles must be increased.

(e) However, this service capacity should not be increased through conventional, categorical approaches. Services to children and their families can be most effectively provided through consortia which include schools, other health and human service

providers, parents, and community groups. Collaboration is necessary and more effective because the goals of school and community services are interdependent; fragmentation of existing state and local services otherwise inhibits their effectiveness; and community-based services offer resources and competence that schools do not have. Both the state and counties must develop policies and incentives to improve collaboration at the local level.

(f) Therefore, it is the intent of the Legislature that by implementing the Healthy Start Support Services for Children Act, children in need of assistance to overcome the barriers to healthy, productive lives be given assistance in all of the following ways:

(1) By creating a learning environment that is optimally responsive to the physical, emotional, and intellectual needs of each child.

(2) By fostering interagency collaboration and communication at the local level to more efficiently and effectively deliver human support services to children and their families.

(3) By encouraging the full use of existing agencies, professional personnel, and public and private funds to ensure that children are ready and able to learn, and to prevent duplication of services and unnecessary expenditures.

(4) By encouraging the development of a local interagency oversight mechanism that includes a records system to evaluate cost and effectiveness, and the development of a process of self-assessment of those records and the way in which they are used, to improve the effectiveness of services.

(Added by Stats. 1991, Ch. 759, Sec. 1.)