

AMENDED IN SENATE JUNE 4, 2001

AMENDED IN SENATE APRIL 17, 2001

SENATE BILL

No. 620

**Introduced by Senator Ortiz
(Coauthors: Senators Kuehl and Polanco)**

February 22, 2001

An act to ~~add Sections 4028 and 4029 to~~ *add and repeal Section 4028* of the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to mental health, ~~and making an appropriation therefor.~~

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 620, as amended, Ortiz. Suicide treatment and prevention.

Existing law provides for suicide prevention services in a variety of contexts.

This bill would establish the California Suicide Prevention Act of 2001, and would require the State Department of Mental Health to ~~convene a California Comprehensive Suicide Prevention Strategy Council, which is to~~ develop and submit to the Governor and the Legislature no later than May 1, 2002, a statewide comprehensive suicide prevention ~~strategy~~ *strategic plan*. This bill would *require the department to convene a council of mental health and suicide prevention organizations and to consult with the council in the development of the statewide strategic plan. The bill would prescribe the membership composition of the council, and would require that the council initially meet no later than January 10, 2002. The council would cease to exist as of* *Those provisions would be repealed on January 1, 2003.*

~~This bill would also establish the Youth and Older Adult Suicide Prevention Demonstration Program. Under the bill, the State Department of Mental Health would be required to establish, no later than June 30, 2002, 5 demonstration projects that provide training and establish programs relating to youth and older adult suicide prevention. The bill would require that the projects be 2 years in duration, and that the department report to the Governor and the Legislature no later than June 30, 2002, as to the effectiveness of the program.~~

This bill would make various legislative findings and declarations regarding the suicide problem in California.

~~This bill would appropriate \$3,000,000 from the General Fund to the State Department of Mental Health for the purposes of the bill, as specified.~~

Vote: $\frac{2}{3}$ majority. Appropriation: ~~yes~~ no. Fiscal committee: yes. State-mandated local program: no.

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

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

3 (a) The Surgeon General of the United States has described
4 suicide prevention as a serious public health priority, and has
5 called upon each state to develop a statewide comprehensive
6 suicide prevention strategy using a public health approach. Suicide
7 now ranks eighth among causes of death.

8 (b) In 1998, 3,211 Californians lost their lives to suicide, an
9 average of nine California residents per day. It is estimated that
10 there are between 75,000 and 100,000 suicide attempts in
11 California every year. Eleven percent of all suicides in the nation
12 take place in California.

13 (c) Among older adults, suicide rates are increasing, making
14 suicide the leading fatal injury among the elderly population in
15 California. In California, the rate of completed suicide among
16 adults 75 years of age or older is over twice the rate of other age
17 groups. As the proportion of California's population age 75 and
18 over increases, the number of suicides among persons in this age
19 group will also increase unless an effective suicide prevention
20 strategy is implemented.

21 (d) Adolescents are far more likely to attempt suicide than
22 other age groups in California. Data indicate that there are 100



1 attempts for every adolescent suicide completed. In 1996, 207
2 California youths died by suicide. Using this estimate, there were
3 likely more than 20,000 suicide attempts made by California
4 adolescents, or approximately 20 percent of all the estimated
5 suicide attempts that occurred in California.

6 (e) Of all of the violent deaths associated with schools
7 nationwide since 1992, 14 percent were suicides.

8 (f) Homicide and suicide rank as the third and fifth leading
9 causes of death for youth, respectively. Both are preventable.
10 While the death rates for unintentional injuries decreased by more
11 than 40 percent between 1979 and 1996, the death rates for
12 homicide and suicide increased for youth. Evidence is growing in
13 terms of the links between suicide and other forms of violence.
14 This provides compelling reasons for broadening the state's scope
15 in identifying risk factors for self-harmful behavior. The number
16 of estimated youth suicide attempts and the growing concerns of
17 youth violence can best be addressed through the implementation
18 of successful gatekeeper training programs to identify and refer
19 youth at risk for self-harmful behavior.

20 (g) The American Association of Suicidology (AAS)
21 conservatively estimates that the lives of at least six persons related
22 to or connected to individuals who attempt or complete suicide are
23 impacted. Using these estimates, in 1998 more than 600,000
24 Californians struggled to cope with the impact of suicide.

25 (h) Decreases in alcohol and drug abuse, as well as decreases
26 in access to lethal means, significantly reduce the number of
27 suicides.

28 (i) Actual incidences of suicide attempts are expected to be
29 higher than reported because attempts not requiring medical
30 attention are less likely to be reported. The underreporting of
31 suicide completion is also likely since suicide classification
32 involves conclusions regarding the intent of the deceased. The
33 stigma associated with suicide is also likely to contribute to
34 underreporting.

35 (j) Without interagency collaboration and support for proven,
36 community-based, culturally competent suicide prevention and
37 intervention programs, the incidence of occurrences of suicide is
38 likely to rise.



1 (k) Emerging data on rates of suicide based on gender,
2 ethnicity, age, and geographic areas demand a new strategy that
3 responds to the needs of a diverse population.

4 (l) The United States Surgeon General has recommended each
5 state develop a statewide comprehensive suicide prevention
6 strategy.

7 SEC. 2. Section 4028 is added to the Welfare and Institutions
8 Code, to read:

9 4028. (a) This section shall be known and may be cited as the
10 California Suicide Prevention Act of 2001.

11 ~~(b) The department shall convene a California Comprehensive
12 Suicide Prevention Strategy Council. The council shall develop~~

13 *(b) The department shall develop a comprehensive statewide
14 plan on the prevention of suicide. The department may use
15 consultant services for this purpose. In order to ensure the
16 involvement of diverse stakeholders in the development of the plan,
17 the department or the entity developing the plan under contract
18 with the department shall convene a council of mental health and
19 suicide prevention organizations. In consultation with the council,
20 the department shall develop and submit to the Governor and the
21 Legislature, by May 1, 2002, a statewide comprehensive suicide
22 prevention strategy strategic plan that shall include specific
23 measurable goals and proposed timelines for reaching those goals.*

24 (c) The council shall consider, as a model for the California
25 strategy, the United States Surgeon General's National Suicide
26 Prevention Strategy.

27 (d) The council ~~shall~~ *may, in the development of the strategic
28 plan, review the missions, as provided in statute, of major state
29 mental health, health, aging, and school mental health programs
30 and recommend, as necessary and appropriate, statutory changes
31 to include suicide prevention in the mission of those programs.
32 The council shall prepare a report as to that review, including its
33 recommendations, and shall submit the report to the Governor and
34 the Legislature by May 1, 2002. mission statement of those
35 programs.*

36 (e) The members of the council shall be appointed by the
37 director. The membership of the council shall include ~~all of the
38 following:~~

39 ~~(1) Representatives~~ *representatives* of organizations that
40 advocate for the prevention of suicide and improvement of mental



1 health treatment or provide suicide prevention or survivor support
2 services.

3 ~~(2) Representatives of the State Department of Mental Health,
4 State~~

5 *(f) The membership of the council may include the following:*

6 *(1) Representatives of the State Department of Health Services,
7 State Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs, State
8 Department of Social Services, State Department of Education,
9 the California Department of Aging, the Board of Corrections, and
10 the Department of the Youth Authority.*

11 ~~(3)–~~

12 ~~(2) Representatives of county mental health and health
13 departments and local law enforcement.~~

14 ~~(f) The council shall initially meet no later than January 10,
15 2002. The council shall cease to exist as of January 1, 2003, unless
16 subsequent legislation is enacted to extend the date.~~

17 ~~SEC. 3. Section 4029 is added to the Welfare and Institutions
18 Code, to read:~~

19 ~~4029. (a) This section shall be known and may be cited as the
20 Youth and Older Adult Suicide Prevention Demonstration
21 Program.~~

22 ~~(b) The department shall establish no later than June 30, 2002,
23 five demonstration projects that provide training and establish
24 programs relating to youth and older adult suicide prevention in
25 order to demonstrate the effectiveness of youth and older adult
26 suicide prevention programs. The demonstration projects shall be
27 operational for two years. At least two of the demonstration
28 projects shall be targeted toward youth suicide prevention and at
29 least two shall be targeted toward suicide prevention in older
30 adults.~~

31 ~~(c) (1) At least one of the youth demonstration projects shall
32 be established according to the model youth suicide prevention
33 program jointly developed by the United States Department of
34 Health Services, Public Health Service, Centers for Disease
35 Control, and the National Center for Injury Prevention and
36 Control.~~

37 ~~(2) The director is encouraged to ensure that the demonstration
38 projects described in paragraph (1) include at least one of the
39 following eight essential prevention strategies:~~

40 ~~(A) School gatekeeper training.~~



- 1 ~~(B) Community gatekeeper training.~~
- 2 ~~(C) General community suicide prevention education.~~
- 3 ~~(D) Screening programs.~~
- 4 ~~(E) Peer support programs.~~
- 5 ~~(F) Twenty-four hour crisis centers and hotlines.~~
- 6 ~~(G) Means restrictions.~~
- 7 ~~(H) Interventions after a suicide.~~

8 ~~(d) The funds appropriated for purposes of this section shall be~~
 9 ~~allocated by the department on a competitive basis that includes~~
 10 ~~consideration of different rates of risk of suicide based on age,~~
 11 ~~ethnicity, gender, prevalence of mental health disorders, and~~
 12 ~~different rates of suicide based on geographic areas in California.~~

13 ~~(e) The department shall prepare a report as to the effectiveness~~
 14 ~~of the demonstration projects established pursuant to this section.~~
 15 ~~The department shall submit that report to the Governor and~~
 16 ~~Legislature no later than June 30, 2004.~~

17 ~~SEC. 4. The sum of three million dollars (\$3,000,000) is~~
 18 ~~hereby appropriated from the General Fund to the State~~
 19 ~~Department of Mental Health for the purposes of implementing~~
 20 ~~suicide prevention programs pursuant to Sections 4028 and 4029~~
 21 ~~of the Welfare and Institutions Code. Of the money appropriated,~~
 22 ~~two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) shall be available for the~~
 23 ~~purposes of funding the California Comprehensive Suicide~~
 24 ~~Prevention Strategy Council, two million eight hundred thousand~~
 25 ~~dollars (\$2,800,000) shall be available for the purposes of funding~~
 26 ~~the youth and older adult suicide prevention demonstration~~
 27 ~~programs, and three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000) shall be~~
 28 ~~available to the department for the purpose of contracting for an~~
 29 ~~independent evaluation of the demonstration projects.~~

30 ~~(g) The department shall implement this section to the extent~~
 31 ~~funds are appropriated by the Legislature in the Budget Act or~~
 32 ~~another statute for this purpose.~~

33 ~~(h) This section shall remain in effect only until January 1,~~
 34 ~~2003, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute,~~
 35 ~~that is enacted before January 1, 2003, deletes or extends that date.~~

