

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 15, 2008

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2007—08 REGULAR SESSION

**ASSEMBLY BILL**

**No. 2129**

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**Introduced by Assembly Member Beall**

February 20, 2008

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An act to add Section 123573 to the Health and Safety Code, relating to maternal health.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2129, as amended, Beall. Maternal health: alcohol and substance abuse screening and treatment.

Existing law requires the State Department of Public Health to implement and administer various health care programs for pregnant women, infants, and children, *and the State Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs to administer various alcohol and drug abuse programs.*

This bill would require the department, *in collaboration with the State Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs*, no later than January 1, 2010, to develop, coordinate, and oversee the implementation of a model program for the universal screening, assessment, referral, and treatment of pregnant women and women of childbearing age who are suffering from drug and alcohol abuse. The bill would *also* require the ~~department~~ *State Department of Public Health, in collaboration with the State Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs*, to identify, and provide assistance to, counties in the state that may elect to participate in the program, and to facilitate the implementation of model strategies for the screening and treatment of substance abuse problems in women of childbearing age in those counties.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: 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 the following:

2 (a) Fetal alcohol syndrome is one of the leading known, and  
3 preventable causes of mental retardation and birth defects. A  
4 pregnant woman who drinks alcohol can unknowingly expose her  
5 unborn baby to many harmful side effects, and there is no known  
6 safe time during pregnancy or amount of alcohol to drink while  
7 pregnant.

8 (b) There is an acute need to address substance use during  
9 pregnancy from a combined prevention and intervention  
10 perspective. California must take action on this issue in an effort  
11 to reduce the human suffering related to perinatal substance use.  
12 Furthermore, there are enormous financial costs related to health  
13 care, and the impacts on the foster care system, education, and  
14 corrections system, which are traceable to the effects of perinatal  
15 substance exposure. Numerous studies have demonstrated the cost  
16 effectiveness of an approach that combines universal screening,  
17 brief intervention, and treatment for pregnant women with  
18 substance abuse problems.

19 (c) Uniform screenings for substance abuse and interventions  
20 for alcohol-related problems have not yet been widely implemented  
21 in primary care settings, emergency rooms, state licensed facilities,  
22 and clinics. The complexity of the issues of perinatal substance  
23 use requires an approach that integrates the resources and best  
24 practices from a number of fields and state agencies, including  
25 public health.

26 (d) There are a number of highly successful methodologies for  
27 screening for substance abuse in pregnant women that are currently  
28 in use, and that feature a five-question questionnaire specifically  
29 designed to quickly identify obstetrical patients in need of in-depth  
30 assessment or followup monitoring. This brief and time saving  
31 methodology can easily be integrated into a woman's initial  
32 prenatal visit and used for followup screening throughout the  
33 pregnancy at minimal cost.

34 SEC. 2. Section 123573 is added to the Health and Safety Code,  
35 to read:

36 123573. (a) No later than January 1, 2010, the department, *in*  
37 *collaboration with the State Department of Alcohol and Drug*  
38 *Programs*, shall develop, coordinate, and oversee the

1 implementation of a model program for the universal screening,  
2 assessment, referral, and treatment of pregnant women and women  
3 of childbearing age who are suffering from drug and alcohol abuse.  
4 The purposes of the program are to establish a uniform  
5 methodology for screening for substance abuse in women by all  
6 providers in primary care settings, emergency rooms, licensed  
7 medical facilities, and clinics, and to facilitate the development of  
8 a standardized treatment protocol for treating substance abuse  
9 problems in women who are, or may become, pregnant.

10 (b) The department, *in collaboration with the State Department*  
11 *of Alcohol and Drug Programs*, shall identify, and provide  
12 assistance to counties that may elect to participate in the program,  
13 and shall facilitate the implementation of model strategies for the  
14 screening and treatment of substance abuse problems in women  
15 of childbearing age in those counties.