STATE OF CALIFORNIA
AUTHENTICATED
ELECTRONIC LEGAL MATERIAL
LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL BUREAU

State of California

WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE

Section 4371

4371. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) Each year in California over 65,000 teenagers become adolescent mothers and 230 teenagers commit suicide. Each year more than 20 percent of California's teenagers drop out of high school.

(b) Thirty percent of California's elementary school pupils experience school adjustment problems, many of which are evident the first four years of school, that is, kindergarten and grades 1 to 3, inclusive.

(c) Problems that our children experience, whether in school or at home, that remain undetected and untreated grow and manifest themselves in all areas of their later lives.

(d) There is a clear relationship between early adjustment problems and later adolescent problems, including, but not limited to, poor school attendance, low achievement, delinquency, drug abuse, and high school dropout rates. In many cases, signs of these problems can be detected in the early grades.

(e) It is in California's best interest, both in economic and human terms, to identify and treat the minor difficulties that our children are experiencing before those difficulties become major barriers to later success. It is far more humane and cost-effective to make a small investment in early mental health intervention and prevention services now and avoid larger costs, including, but not limited to, foster care, group home placement, intensive special education services, mental health treatment, or probation supervised care.

(f) Programs like the Primary Intervention Program and the San Diego Unified Counseling Program for Children have proven very effective in helping children adjust to the school environment and learn more effective coping skills that in turn result in better school achievement, increased attendance, and increased self-esteem.

(g) To create the optimum learning environment for our children, schools, teachers, parents, public and private service providers, and community-based organizations must enter into locally appropriate cooperative agreements to ensure that all pupils will receive the benefits of school-based early mental health intervention and prevention services that are designed to meet their personal, social, and educational needs.

(Amended by Stats. 1992, Ch. 722, Sec. 22. Effective September 15, 1992.)