

Senate Bill 635

Access to Early Childhood Developmental Screening Senator Caroline Menjivar (D – San Fernando Valley)

SUMMARY

SB 635 would provide tens of thousands of children with access to early childhood developmental screening and other appropriate developmental screenings. It would also ensure that children ages 0-5 who need additional services after screening are referred for further assessment and intervention at no cost to the parent.

PROBLEM

Many children with developmental delays or behavior concerns are not identified as early as possible, delaying their access to help in social and educational settings. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), in the United States, about 1 in 6 children aged 3 to 17 have one or more developmental or behavioral disabilities such as autism, a learning disorder, or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder.ⁱ However, many children with developmental disabilities are not identified until they are in school, by which time significant delays might have occurred and opportunities for treatment may have been missed. A 2023 Report by the Early Childhood Technical Center found that racial and economic disparities also occur in access to early intervention, screening, identification, and referral. In the past year 36% of families above low income reported that their child had received a screening in comparison to 27.2% of low income families.ⁱⁱ Black and African American families have the lowest screening and response rate due to affordability and insurance issues.ⁱⁱⁱ Research shows that early intervention treatment services can greatly improve a child's development. Services can include a variety of options based on a child's need, but many parents aren't aware of where to access support or figure out what steps to take to support their child's development.

BACKGROUND

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) oversees the services and support to over 400,000 individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. The Early Start Program provides for the delivery of these services to infants and toddlers at risk of having developmental disabilities. Eligibility for these services and support are determined by the Regional Center (RC) system which coordinate community-based services through service coordinators.

Child care and home visits are existing services received by tens of thousands of children and families throughout California.

Programs such as Alternative Payment, General Child Care, CalWORKS, Family Child Care Home Education Network

(FCCHEN), and California State Preschool are provided in local communities and have established relationships with the children and families they serve. They are trusted advisors and partners to parents, and in a unique position to support families in accessing early screening services for their children and makes referrals to developmental and trauma services. These services assist families in supporting the growth and development of their children through early identification and referral services. These services are critical in helping children reach their full potential to thrive in school and life.

California has made historic investments to expand services within our health, mental health, and developmental services. California passed (AB 1004 Stats. 2019 Ch. 387), which required early and periodic screening and developmental services for Medi-Cal beneficiaries' ages 0-3. There is a need for a clear pathway for eligible families to access services through existing services and relationships in their home language, accessible locations, and during convenient hours.

SOLUTION

California has the opportunity to reach tens of thousands of children, who are currently being served in either subsidized child care programs and through home visiting support services by providing each child in these programs the opportunity to be screened for development and trauma concerns. SB 635 would:

- ✓ Direct all subsidized child care programs (Alternative Payment, General Child Care, CalWORKS, and FCCHEN, California State Preschool) and home visiting programs to screen all children, following family consent, with an Ages and Stages screening (for children 0-5) and other appropriate developmental screenings.
- ✓ Direct the California Departments of Education (CDE) and Social Services (CDSS) to set up a centralized billing point to draw down Federal Funding to pay the subsidized Child care programs for providing the screening.
- ✓ Direct CDE and CDSS to work with the Department of Health Care Services, the Department of Developmental Services, and the Office of the Surgeon General to establish processes to ensure identified children are receiving needed intervention services in a timely manner and in their home language.

STATUS

Introduced – February 16, 2023

SUPPORT

Child Care Resource Center (Co-Sponsor)
EveryChild California (Co-Sponsor)
First 5 California (Co-Sponsor)

CONTACT

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ⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/developmentaldisabilities/features/increase-in-developmental-disabilities.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/topics/racialequity/factsheet-racialequity-2023.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34986680/>

