

ASSEMBLYMEMBER DR. CORY A. JACKSON

60TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

AB 73: Black Mental Health Navigator Certification

BILL SUMMARY

AB 73 would require the Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI) to develop a specialty certificate program and specialized training requirements for a Black Mental Health Navigator. The bill aims to improve mental health support for Black communities through culturally competent training, data collection and employment outcomes.

BACKGROUND

Black communities face significant barriers to accessing mental health care, including cultural stigmas, provider bias, and systemic inequalities. The lack of culturally competent mental health professionals and navigators exacerbates disparities in access to care.

Recent studies have shown that African Americans are less likely to access psychiatric services, and when they do, the quality of care they receive is often lower than that provided to white individuals. Consequently, the unmet need for behavioral health care is more pronounced among Black populations than among white populations.¹

Furthermore, rates of ER visits for specific mental health disorders, including substance use disorders, anxiety disorders, and mood disorders, are highest among non-Hispanic Black adults.²

Community health workers play a crucial role in bridging these gaps by providing culturally relevant support and connecting individuals to appropriate services.

PROBLEM

Despite existing mental health programs, Black individuals often struggle to find culturally

competent care. Many are hesitant to seek support due to a lack of trust in healthcare institutions, a shortage of Black mental health professionals, and limited awareness of available resources. The absence of specialized training for community health workers addressing Black mental health further contributes to these challenges.

Although California has allocated additional financial investments in recent years to expand the role and efforts of Community Health Workers, there is still a distinct absence of targeted training and services specifically tailored to the Black community to help navigate those who need behavioral healthcare services.

SOLUTION

AB 73 would address these issues by establishing a Black Mental Health Navigator Certification program that tailors its practices to black mental health needs. This includes training in mental health resources and awareness, entry-level assessments and crisis intervention for non-emergency cases, and navigation support to connect individuals with state resources and licensed professionals.

STAFF CONTACT

Latifah Alexander
916-319-2060
Latifah.alexander@asm.ca.gov

Savannah Gallon
916-319-2060
Savannah.gallon@asm.ca.gov

¹ [Mental health care among blacks in America: Confronting racism and constructing solutions - PMc \(nih.gov\)](#)

² [National Health Statistics Reports, Number 181, March 1, 2023 \(cdc.gov\)](#)