



AB 970 (McKinnor) Enhanced Child Abuse Reporting Pilot Program FACT SHEET

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ISSUE

Current law requires mandated reporters to report to a county child protection hotline or a law enforcement agency any known or reasonable suspicion of child abuse and/or neglect. Despite having this important responsibility mandated reporters often receive inadequate training and support with decision making, leaving them unprepared to make sound decisions about when to make a report. This results in both over-reporting of children who do not require a child protection intervention, as well as under-reporting of children who may be unsafe.

Mandated reporter decision-making is often influenced by bias, fear, and other factors that are distinct from concerns about child safety. Well-intentioned mandated reporters may believe that making a report to the county child protection hotline is the best way to connect a family in need to supportive resources. This creates trauma and fear, and erodes trust in the organizations families should turn to in times of need, making them hesitant to seek help in the future. Additionally, over-reporting contributes to racial disproportionality of Black and Native American children in the child welfare system. For instance, a recent study found that in California, 50% of Black and Native American children are investigated by CPS by their 18th birthday . In comparison, only 25% of White children face CPS investigations by the time they turn 18.

Finally, the current model of mandated reporting is a reactive intervention by design and misses critical opportunities to provide supportive resources to families upstream to prevent future child abuse and/or neglect.

SOLUTION

AB 970 would pilot an improved model of mandated reporting in Los Angeles County to ensure that mandated reporters are adequately trained and supported to make accurate decisions about reporting known or suspected child abuse and/or neglect. AB 970 would not change current law requiring mandated reporters to report to child welfare or law enforcement when abuse or neglect is known or suspected. All current penalties associated with current mandated reporting law would remain intact under the pilot.

AB 970 would establish a two-year pilot, beginning in 2026, in Los Angeles County. A select group of entities employing mandated reporters would opt into the pilot, which would do the following:

- Develop and deliver a comprehensive training on mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect;

- Implement a standardized decision-support tool (decision tree) for use by mandated reporters, upon completion of the training, to support their decision making about when a report to the county child protection hotline or law enforcement is required by state law;
- Prompt mandated reporters to refer a family to a community-based services provider for supportive resources when a report to the county child protection hotline or law enforcement is not required by state law;
- Implement an evaluation of the pilot to determine its efficacy overall, including its impacts on child safety, mandated reporter decision- making, and family utilization of community-based resources.

SUPPORT

County of Los Angeles (Sponsor)
Alliance for Children's Rights
Child Care Resource Center
County Welfare Directors Association of California
Los Angeles County Office of Education
National Association of Social Workers - CA Chapter
Public Counsel
Shields for Families