

Date of Hearing: March 12, 2024

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Mike Fong, Chair

AB 1914 (Grayson) – As Introduced January 24, 2024

**SUBJECT:** Community colleges: providers of care for individuals with developmental disabilities: model curriculum

**SUMMARY:** Requires the office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges (CCCCO) to develop a model curriculum for a certification program for providers of care for individuals with developmental disabilities, designed to be offered at community college campuses where there is sufficient student interest and properly qualified faculty to sustain such a program. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires the CCCCCO to develop a model curriculum for a certification program for providers of care for individuals with developmental disabilities, and requires the model curriculum to be designed to be offered at community college campuses where there is sufficient student interest and properly qualified faculty to sustain such a program.
- 2) Requires the CCCCCO, in developing the model curriculum, consult with individuals and organizations with expertise in the provision of care for individuals with developmental disabilities and the training of practitioners for that task.
- 3) Finds and declares that:
  - a) There is a great need in this state for well-trained providers of care for individuals with developmental disabilities.
  - b) Providing care for California’s population of individuals with developmental disabilities is a difficult job that requires a practitioner to possess unique and specific skills in order to provide the high-quality care that these individuals deserve.
- 4) Establishes the intent of the Legislature that the California Community College (CCC) system create a certification program to establish a pathway for persons interested in the care for individuals with developmental disabilities to obtain the necessary preparation.

**EXISTING LAW:** Establishes the CCC, under the administration of the Board of Governors (BOG) of the CCC, as one of the segments of public postsecondary education in this state. The BOG appoints the Chancellor of the CCC to serve as the chief executive officer of the segment. The CCC comprises 116 campuses operated by community college districts throughout the state. (Education Code (EDC) Section 66700, et seq.)

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown

**COMMENTS:** *Purpose.* According to the author, “the high turnover of direct service staff is primarily attributed to the inadequate compensation they receive for their crucial roles. Elevating the professionalism of this workforce through enhanced training and certification opportunities holds the potential not only to improve staff retention but also to establish a clear path for career advancement. By developing a model curriculum that grants certification to individuals seeking

to work with those with developmental disabilities, we can empower this essential workforce to demand higher wages as a result of their professional training.”

*Background.* The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) oversees the coordination and delivery of services for Californians with developmental disabilities through a statewide network of 21 community-based, non-profit agencies known as regional centers. Regional centers provide assessments, determine eligibility for services, and offer case management services. Regional centers also develop, purchase, and coordinate the services in each person’s Individual Program Plan.

California’s regional centers support more than 350,000 individuals with developmental disabilities in community settings. Direct services to support individuals in their own or family homes, out-of-home residential settings, and non-residential daytime support and employment settings are provided by contracted service providers. In state-run care, most direct services were provided by licensed staff who have completed mandated courses of study. In community care, most direct care is provided by staff who are paid at or just above the minimum wage and do not complete a robust prescribed course of training. Consequently, the staff turnover rate is high – according to information from the American Network of Community Options and Resources, the turnover rate for direct services professionals (DSP) is 44%.

Current law does not recommend a course of training for most unlicensed direct service staff to complete to enhance their effectiveness in supporting people with developmental disabilities. DSS submitted a service provider rate study, completed by Burns and Associates, to the Legislature in 2019 that included a recommendation for pay differentials for direct service workers who completed additional training and certification. The recommendation contained specific criteria to be developed by DDS; using National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals’ DSP Certification program as an example:

- 1) *Level 1.* 100 hours of training, commitment to code of ethics, demonstration of competency in four specified areas, at least one letter of support from a service recipient (or family member/guardian).
- 2) *Level 2.* Level 1 requirements plus another 100 hours of training and demonstration of competency in an additional four areas.
- 3) *Level 3 (Specialist).* Level 2 requirements plus 40 hours of specialized instruction and demonstration of competency in specialty area (inclusion, health support, employment, positive behavior support, aging)

*Arguments in support.* The California Disability Services Association (CDSA) wrote in support of AB 1914, noting that “...CDSA cares deeply about ensuring all Californians eligible for regional center services can access what they need to live fully integrated lives in their communities. Unfortunately, California is grappling with a crisis in access to care for individuals with developmental disabilities due to a substantial shortage of service providers dedicated to serving those with developmental disabilities. Staff providing direct care are paid at or just above the minimum wage and do not complete a robust prescribed course of training. As a result, the staff turnover rate is high. By developing a model curriculum that grants certification to individuals seeking to work with those with developmental disabilities, we can empower this essential workforce to demand higher wages because of their professional training.”

*Committee comments.* As noted in this bill’s legislative intent, the CCCCCO would be tasked with creating a model curriculum for a certification program that has not yet been formalized. While the lack of a formal program will present challenges from a curriculum design standpoint, it does present an opportunity for subject matter experts in academia and DSP services to collaborate and design a model that will undoubtedly benefit one of California’s most vulnerable populations.

*Committee staff notes that,* according to information provided by the Chancellor’s office, the CCCCCO does not develop model curricula. This is led by the California Community College Curriculum Committee (5C), which works closely with the CCCCCO. The 5C is responsible for developing and revising all Title 5 regulations related to curriculum and instruction, and provides guidance to the CCCCCO on all curriculum related matters. Their work is important to ensure that local, regional, and statewide curricular design and approval is faculty led and driven by identified student need.

*Committee staff also notes that* AB 1914 (Grayson) does require the new curricula be offered at community colleges where there is established student need and properly qualified faculty to sustain the new program. It is generally considered best practice to first determine student need and demand before determining if and when to develop a model curricula in a new area.

*Moving forward, the author should to collaborate with stakeholders in the CCCCCO and CCC Academic Senate to ensure that the appropriate entities are being tasked and consulted.*

*Prior legislation.* AB 1417 (Frazier, 2019) was essentially identical to AB 1914 (Grayson), and was held in Senate Education.

AB 968 (Christina Garcia, 2019) required the CCCCCO to establish a naturalist workforce model curriculum and related vocational programs on or before July 31, 2022, for the 2022–23 academic year, and required the CCCCCO to consult with specified entities in developing the curriculum, and would require the CCCC Academic Senate to approve, modify, or reject the curriculum. AB 968 was held in the Assembly Committee on Appropriations.

SB 462 (Stern, 2019) required the CCCCCO, in collaboration with the CCC Academic Senate, to develop a forest and woodlands restoration workforce model curriculum and related programs to be offered by community college districts beginning July 31, 2021. SB 462 was held in the Assembly Committee on Appropriations.

## **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

### **Support**

California Disability Services Association

### **Opposition**

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