

Date of Hearing: April 9, 2019

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Jose Medina, Chair

AB 521 (Berman) – As Amended March 26, 2019

SUBJECT: Physician and surgeons: firearms: training

[Note: This bill is double-referred to the Assembly Committee on Public Safety and will be heard by that committee as it relates to issues under its jurisdiction.]

SUMMARY: Requires the University of California (UC) Firearm Violence Research Center (UCFC) at UC Davis to develop, promote, and provide education and training programs for medical and mental health providers on the prevention of firearm-related injury and death. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires the UCFC to develop education and training programs that address all of the following:
 - a) The epidemiology of firearm-related injury and death;
 - b) The role of health care providers in preventing firearm-related harm, including how to assess individual patients for risk of firearm-related injury and death;
 - c) Best practices for conversations about firearm ownership, access, and storage;
 - d) Appropriate tools for practitioner intervention with patients at risk for firearm-related injury or death; and,
 - e) Relevant laws and policies related to prevention of firearm-related injury and death.
- 2) Requires the UCFC to:
 - a) Promote participation in the education and training programs among practicing health care professionals and health care students;
 - b) Develop relevant curricular materials and provide education in-person and by remote link at medical institutions, and recruit and train additional trainers;
 - c) Develop relevant education and training resources, including educational videos; and,
 - d) Conduct research to further identify gaps in knowledge and structural barriers that prevent counseling and other interventions.
- 3) Requires UC to provide programmatic and financial reports regarding the above by December 31, 2020 and annually thereafter.
- 4) Stipulates that all of the above is applicable only upon adoption of a relevant resolution by the UC Regents.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes UC, to be administered by the Board of Regents, with full powers of organization and government, subject only to such legislative control as may be necessary to insure the security of its funds and compliance with the terms of the endowments of the university and such competitive bidding procedures as may be made applicable to the university by statute for the letting of construction contracts, sales of real property, and purchasing of materials, goods, and services. (California Constitution Article IX, Section 9)
- 2) Establishes legislative intent, and requests the UC Regents, to establish a center for research into firearm violence to address the following: the nature of firearm violence, including individual and societal determinants of risk for involvement in firearm violence, whether as a victim or perpetrator; individual, community and societal consequences of firearm violence; and prevention and treatment of firearm violence at the individual, community, and societal levels. (Penal Code Sect. 14232.)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: *Background.* The UCFC at UC Davis Sacramento campus – the first state-funded center for firearm violence research – was established via the higher education trailer bill to the 2016-17 Budget Act (AB 1602, Chapter 24) for the purposes described above. The budget included an appropriation of \$5 million to the center, which is available for expenditure for five years. Thirty years ago, the Violence Prevention Research Program (VPRP) at UC Davis developed what has come to be known as the public health approach to preventing violence, with a particular emphasis on firearm violence. The UCFC is a part of the overall VPRP.

Purpose. According to information from the author’s office, while many health care providers recognize their responsibility to help prevent firearm-related injury and death, many cite lack of knowledge regarding when and how to counsel patients as a principal barrier to action. A position statement adopted by the California Medical Association Board of Trustees on July 28, 2017, states that “expanded education and training are needed to improve clinician familiarity with the benefits and risks of firearm ownership, safety practices, and communication with patients about firearm violence.” It further states that “medical schools and residency programs should incorporate firearm violence prevention into their academic curricula” and that “California-specific resources, such as continuing medical education modules, toolkits, patient education handouts, and clinical intervention information would help to address this practice gap.”

According to the author, “AB 521 recognizes that health care providers are uniquely positioned to help prevent firearm-related harm and that the University of California Firearm Violence Research Center is uniquely qualified to equip them with the education, training, and resources needed to identify patients at risk for such harm, provide evidence-based counseling to mitigate risk, and intervene in situations of imminent danger.”

Some Training Materials Currently Available. The VPRP website includes a link titled, “What You Can Do”, which provides resources to health care providers regarding prevention of firearm injury and death. (<https://health.ucdavis.edu/what-you-can-do/>) This site includes information assisting practitioners with assessment, counseling and intervention for at-risk patients. Materials include handouts (for practitioners and patients), a 40-minute video, and two downloadable presentations.

The UCFC sees the materials described above as just a beginning. AB 521 is intended to allow for development of full curricula - courses of classroom and clinical instruction - suitable to an array of health care professions, as well as expanded materials for clinicians in practice. The center also believes that, while the website provides a generalized educational opportunity for those who actively seek it out, AB 521 takes a more proactive approach in educating healthcare practitioners throughout the state about firearm-injury prevention in their patients. Finally, UCFC believes that evaluation is needed to provide feedback on what is and isn't working – in terms of efforts to have the knowledge transmitted and used and to the effects on patients – and to encourage adoption of these practices elsewhere by publishing the center's findings. Ultimately, the goal of AB 521 is to establish a lasting and dynamic resource that aims to develop a network of invested educators at the local level and provide them ongoing support and resources.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**Support**

Alliance for Community Transformations
Brady California United Against Gun Violence
Psychiatrists for Gun Violence Prevention
Scrubs Addressing The Firearm Epidemic, David Geffen School of Medicine
Scrubs Addressing The Firearm Epidemic, University of California, San Francisco
Women Against Gun Violence
2 Individuals

Opposition

None on file.

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