

# SB 319 (Beall) – FACT SHEET

## Oversight and Monitoring for Foster Children Prescribed Psychotropic Medications

### BACKGROUND

Thousands of California foster children are medicated with powerful psychotropic drugs. Children taking these drugs may suffer irreversible damage without on-going medical monitoring. Legislation is needed to require this monitoring and to provide oversight authority to county public health nurses.

### PROBLEM

Without basic medical attention, psychotropic drugs can cause crippling sedation, morbid obesity, memory loss, diabetes, heart disease, irreversible tremors, other long-term disabilities, and in extreme cases, death.

Thousands of California foster children are medicated using psychotropic drugs, but few receive basic medical safety tests or monitoring. In spite of clear guidelines by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists and the American Diabetes Association, very few foster children receive even basic metabolic testing before or during use of psychotropic medication.

### THIS BILL

Strengthens the role of public health nurses giving explicit responsibility for the oversight and monitoring of the administration of psychotropic drugs to foster children by amending *Welfare & Institutions Code §16501.3:Public Health Nursing Program; Use of Foster Care Public Health Nurses; Duties; Federal Approvals: Health Care Oversight Services.*

Costs as follows:

- 1) Clarifies that the purposes of the public health nursing program include promoting and protecting the physical, mental and developmental well-being of children in the child welfare system.
- 2) Clarifies that the child's caseworker shall use the expertise of the Public Health Nurse to **consult and collaborate to ensure that the child's physical, mental, dental, and developmental needs are met**, and that Public Health Nurses have access to the child's medical and mental health information.
- 3) Adds to the duties of a public health nurse, the oversight and monitoring of each child in foster

care who is administered psychotropic medications, including:

- a. Review of each request for psychotropic to ensure that lab tests, other screenings and measurements, evaluations and assessments required to meet reasonable standards of medical practice have been completed.
  - b. Monitoring to ensure periodic follow-up visits with the prescribing physician, lab work and other measurements are completed, each child's Health & Education Passport includes accurate documentation concerning the psychotropic medications authorized and administered to the child, their efficacy and any adverse effects are promptly addressed, and, if necessary, brought to the attention of the court.
- 4) Adds the ability for non-minor dependents to request the Public Health Nurse to help the child make an informed decision to begin or continue using psychotropic medications.

### SPONSOR

National Center for Youth Law

### SUPPORT

AdvoKids  
Alameda County Foster Youth Alliance  
California CASA  
Children's Advocacy Institute  
Children Now  
Dependency Legal Group of San Diego  
First Focus Campaign for Children  
PEERS  
Public Counsel

### OPPOSE

### STATUS

Referred to Senate Health Committee & Senate Human Services Committee

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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