



**American Academy of Pediatrics, California**  
5000 Campus Drive Newport Beach, CA 92660  
**Phone** (626) 796-1632 | **Fax**  
(626) 628-3382  
**Email:** office@aap-ca.org | www.AAP-CA.org

---

April 22, 2022

The Honorable Jesse Gabriel  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 942940  
Sacramento, CA 94249-0045

**RE: AB-309 Pupil mental health: model referral protocols**  
**AAP-CA Position: SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblymember Gabriel,

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA) representing over 3,000 pediatrician members strongly supports AB 309 as introduced on January 25, 2021, which would require the California Department of Education to create a model mental health referral protocol for use by schools across California.

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, children in California were already struggling with mental health disorders. The pandemic has only exacerbated these issues. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) emergency room visits from youth struggling with mental health issues increased 24% for children age 5-11 and 31% for children age 12-17 compared to 2019. Older youth are also suffering, with 25% of CDC survey respondents between the ages of 18 and 24 reporting that they had contemplated suicide in the last 30 days.

Undiagnosed and untreated mental health issues have significant negative effects on school achievement and life outcomes. Early detection, however, can help improve attendance, behavior, and overall academic achievement. Teachers are often the first to notice changes in student behavior that can signal mental health issues, yet many educators report a lack of preparedness in addressing these challenges.

AB 309 would require the State Department of Education to develop model referral protocols for addressing pupil mental health concerns, in consultation with teachers, administrators, and others. The training protocols would assist teachers in knowing how and when to make mental health referrals regarding their students.

AAP-CA strongly supports AB 309. Thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of the health and wellbeing of children, youth, and families in California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jacques Corriveau". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jacques Corriveau, M.D. FAAP  
Chair, State Government Affairs Committee  
American Academy of Pediatrics, California

cc: AAP Leadership