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SB-1177 Physician and Surgeon Health and Wellness Program. (2015-2016)

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Senate Bill No. 1177

CHAPTER 591

An act to add Article 14 (commencing with Section 2340) to Chapter 5 of Division 2 of the Business and Professions Code, relating to healing arts.

[Approved by Governor September 24, 2016. Filed with Secretary of State September 24, 2016.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 1177, Galgiani. Physician and Surgeon Health and Wellness Program.

Existing law establishes in the Department of Consumer Affairs the Substance Abuse Coordination Committee, comprised of the executive officers of the department's healing arts boards and a designee of the State Department of Health Care Services. Existing law requires the committee to formulate, by January 1, 2010, uniform and specific standards in specified areas that each healing arts board is required to use in dealing with substance-abusing licensees, whether or not a healing arts board has a formal diversion program.

Existing law, the Medical Practice Act, provides for the licensure and regulation of physicians and surgeons by the Medical Board of California within the Department of Consumer Affairs. Existing law requires all moneys paid to and received by the Medical Board of California to be paid into the State Treasury and credited to the Contingent Fund of the Medical Board of California, which, except for fine and penalty money, is a continuously appropriated fund.

This bill would authorize the board to establish a Physician and Surgeon Health and Wellness Program for the early identification of, and appropriate interventions to support a physician and surgeon in his or her rehabilitation from, substance abuse, as specified. If the board establishes a program, the bill would require the board to contract for the program's administration with a private 3rd-party independent administering entity meeting certain requirements. The bill would require program participants to enter into an individual agreement with the program that includes, among other things, a requirement to pay expenses related to treatment, monitoring, and laboratory tests, as provided.

This bill would create the Physician and Surgeon Health and Wellness Program Account within the Contingent Fund of the Medical Board of California. The bill would require the board to adopt regulations to determine the appropriate fee for a physician and surgeon to participate in the program, as specified. The bill would require these fees to be deposited in the Physician and Surgeon Health and Wellness Program Account and to be available, upon appropriation by the Legislature, for the support of the program. Subject to appropriation by the Legislature, the bill would authorize the board to use moneys from the Contingent Fund of the Medical Board of California to support the initial costs for the board to establish the program, except the bill would prohibit these moneys from being used to cover any costs for individual physician and surgeon participation in the program.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Article 14 (commencing with Section 2340) is added to Chapter 5 of Division 2 of the Business and Professions Code, to read:

Article 14. Physician and Surgeon Health and Wellness Program

2340. (a) The board may establish a Physician and Surgeon Health and Wellness Program for the early identification of, and appropriate interventions to support a physician and surgeon in his or her rehabilitation from, substance abuse to ensure that the physician and surgeon remains able to practice medicine in a manner that will not endanger the public health and safety and that will maintain the integrity of the medical profession. The program, if established, shall aid a physician and surgeon with substance abuse issues impacting his or her ability to practice medicine.

(b) For the purposes of this article, "program" shall mean the Physician and Surgeon Health and Wellness Program.

(c) If the board establishes a program, the program shall meet the requirements of this article.

2340.2. If the board establishes a program, the program shall do all of the following:

(a) Provide for the education of all licensed physicians and surgeons with respect to the recognition and prevention of physical, emotional, and psychological problems.

(b) Offer assistance to a physician and surgeon in identifying substance abuse problems.

(c) Evaluate the extent of substance abuse problems and refer the physician and surgeon to the appropriate treatment by executing a written agreement with a physician and surgeon participant.

(d) Provide for the confidential participation by a physician and surgeon with substance abuse issues who does not have a restriction on his or her practice related to those substance abuse issues. If an investigation of a physician and surgeon occurs after the physician and surgeon has enrolled in the program, the board may inquire of the program whether the physician and surgeon is enrolled in the program and the program shall respond accordingly.

(e) Comply with the Uniform Standards Regarding Substance-Abusing Healing Arts Licensees as adopted by the Substance Abuse Coordination Committee of the department pursuant to Section 315.

2340.4. (a) If the board establishes a program, the board shall contract for the program's administration with a private third-party independent administering entity pursuant to a request for proposals. The process for procuring the services for the program shall be administered by the board pursuant to Article 4 (commencing with Section 10335) of Chapter 2 of Part 2 of Division 2 of the Public Contract Code. However, Section 10425 of the Public Contract Code shall not apply to this subdivision.

(b) The administering entity shall have expertise and experience in the areas of substance or alcohol abuse in healing arts professionals.

(c) The administering entity shall identify and use a statewide treatment resource network that includes treatment and screening programs and support groups and shall establish a process for evaluating the effectiveness of those programs.

(d) The administering entity shall provide counseling and support for the physician and surgeon and for the family of any physician and surgeon referred for treatment.

(e) The administering entity shall make their services available to all licensed California physicians and surgeons, including those who self-refer to the program.

(f) The administering entity shall have a system for immediately reporting a physician and surgeon, including, but not limited to, a physician and surgeon who withdraws or is terminated from the program, to the board. This system shall ensure absolute confidentiality in the communication to the board. The administering entity shall not provide this information to any other individual or entity unless authorized by the participating physician and surgeon or this article.

(g) The contract entered into pursuant to this section shall also require the administering entity to do the following:

(1) Provide regular communication to the board, including annual reports to the board with program statistics, including, but not limited to, the number of participants currently in the program, the number of participants referred by the board as a condition of probation, the number of participants who have successfully completed their agreement period, and the number of participants terminated from the program. In making reports, the administering entity shall not disclose any personally identifiable information relating to any participant.

(2) Submit to periodic audits and inspections of all operations, records, and management related to the program to ensure compliance with the requirements of this article and its implementing rules and regulations. Any audit conducted pursuant to this section shall maintain the confidentiality of all records reviewed and information obtained in the course of conducting the audit and shall not disclose any information identifying a program participant.

(h) If the board determines the administering entity is not in compliance with the requirements of the program or contract entered into with the board, the board may terminate the contract.

2340.6. (a) A physician and surgeon shall, as a condition of participation in the program, enter into an individual agreement with the program and agree to pay expenses related to treatment, monitoring, laboratory tests, and other activities specified in the participant's written agreement. The agreement shall include all of the following:

(1) A jointly agreed-upon plan and mandatory conditions and procedures to monitor compliance with the program.

(2) Compliance with terms and conditions of treatment and monitoring.

(3) Criteria for program completion.

(4) Criteria for termination of a physician and surgeon participant from the program.

(5) Acknowledgment that withdrawal or termination of a physician and surgeon participant from the program shall be reported to the board.

(6) Acknowledgment that expenses related to treatment, monitoring, laboratory tests, and other activities specified by the program shall be paid by the physician and surgeon participant.

(b) Any agreement entered into pursuant to this section shall not be considered a disciplinary action or order by the board and shall not be disclosed to the board if both of the following apply:

(1) The physician and surgeon did not enroll in the program as a condition of probation or as a result of an action by the board.

(2) The physician and surgeon is in compliance with the conditions and procedures in the agreement.

(c) Any oral or written information reported to the board shall remain confidential and shall not constitute a waiver of any existing evidentiary privileges. However, confidentiality regarding the physician and surgeon's participation in the program and related records shall not apply if the board has referred a participant as a condition of probation or as otherwise authorized by this article.

(d) Nothing in this section prohibits, requires, or otherwise affects the discovery or admissibility of evidence in an action by the board against a physician and surgeon based on acts or omissions that are alleged to be grounds for discipline.

(e) Participation in the program shall not be a defense to any disciplinary action that may be taken by the board. This section does not preclude the board from commencing disciplinary action against a physician and surgeon who is terminated unsuccessfully from the program. However, that disciplinary action shall not include as evidence any confidential information unless authorized by this article.

2340.8. (a) The Physician and Surgeon Health and Wellness Program Account is hereby established within the Contingent Fund of the Medical Board of California. Any fees collected by the board pursuant to subdivision (b) shall be deposited in the Physician and Surgeon Health and Wellness Program Account and shall be available, upon appropriation by the Legislature, for the support of the program.

(b) The board shall adopt regulations to determine the appropriate fee that a physician and surgeon participating in the program shall provide to the board. The fee amount adopted by the board shall be set at a level sufficient to cover all costs for participating in the program, including any administrative costs incurred by the board to administer the program.

(c) Subject to appropriation by the Legislature, the board may use moneys from the Contingent Fund of the Medical Board of California to support the initial costs for the board to establish the program under this article, except these moneys shall not be used to cover any costs for individual physician and surgeon participation in the program.