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AB-683 Prisoners: support services. (2017-2018)

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Assembly Bill No. 683

CHAPTER 45

An act relating to prisoners.

[Approved by Governor July 10, 2017. Filed with Secretary of State July 10, 2017.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 683, Eduardo Garcia. Prisoners: support services.

Existing law requires the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to contract with a private nonprofit agency or agencies to establish and operate a visitor center outside each state adult prison in California that has a population of more than 300 inmates. Under existing law, those visitor centers are required to provide minimum services to prison visitors, including, among other services, assistance with transportation between public transit terminals and prisons, child care for visitors' children, and referral to other agencies and services.

This bill would authorize the Counties of Alameda, Imperial, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Diego, Santa Clara, and San Joaquin to implement pilot programs to provide reentry services and support to persons who are, or who are scheduled to be, released from a county jail. The bill would require the pilot programs to include specified components, including support services for parents and a mentorship program. The bill would require each county that elects to implement one or more pilot programs pursuant to these provisions to conduct a study and submit to the Legislature on or before January 1, 2023, a report evaluating the effectiveness of the pilot programs in the county. The bill would also include a statement of legislative findings and declarations.

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

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

SECTION 1. (a) The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

- (1) Studies have consistently found that prisoners who maintain close contact with their family members while incarcerated have better postrelease outcomes and lower recidivism rates. Despite this, corrections officials are often obstinate in supporting this communication with respect to written correspondence, visitation, and phone calls.
- (2) Revising visitation policies to facilitate visits by family members, investing in prison-based literacy programs and less restrictive mail policies, and reducing intrastate prison and jail phone rates would provide prisoners with greater opportunities to maintain close relationships with their families.
- (3) Research cites that positive fatherhood involvement improves life trajectory for a child. Also, fatherhood involvement in a child's life protects against risk factors that pose harm to children, such as problematic behavior, maternal depression, and family economic hardship. Fatherhood involvement is also associated with promoting children's social and language skills.

(4) Specific examples of culturally relevant approaches to parenting, fatherhood support, and young male mentorship include Cara y Corazón, El Joven Noble, and Circulo de Hombres, which have been chosen as the culturally based family strengthening interventions in other initiatives.

(b) It is the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation that accomplishes all of the following:

(1) Creates culturally competent programs that increase opportunities for family friendly contact during and after imprisonment.

(2) Creates culturally competent programmatic support services and reentry strategies outside of imprisonment that support fatherhood involvement, family reunification, and family strengthening.

(3) Supports innovation on culturally relevant parenting, fatherhood support, and young male mentorship to decrease the risk of violence, suicide, and other traumas that children of prisoners who are under 17 years of age may be exposed to by providing education, skills-based training, and early intervention and treatment referrals to parents, families, and children.

SEC. 2. (a) The Counties of Alameda, Imperial, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Diego, Santa Clara, and San Joaquin may implement a pilot program to provide reentry services and support to persons who are, or who are scheduled to be, released from a county jail. Each pilot program established pursuant to this section shall include all of the following components:

(1) Support services for recipients who are parents.

(2) A mentorship program that employs a culturally relevant, population-specific approach that has been employed by nonprofit organizations such as the National Compadres Network and the Brotherhood of Elders.

(3) The establishment of a collaborative body of training and technical advisers.

(4) The establishment of a Youth Advisory Council to help inform and guide program leaders.

(5) Leadership opportunities, particularly for youth.

(6) Services to address mental health issues, including mental health issues relating to sexual exploitation, racial and ethnic disparities, and trauma.

(7) An advisory committee in each county to oversee the establishment and implementation of the pilot program in the county.

(b) A pilot program established pursuant to this section shall require that service providers meet all of the following criteria:

(1) Each provider has a proven track record of providing meaningful, culturally based programming, including the support of gender specific and gender fluid approaches.

(2) Each provider offers services that support culturally based family strengthening, character development, and community mobilization.

(3) Each provider offers services both before and after the recipient's release from a county jail.

(c) (1) Each county that elects to implement a pilot program pursuant to this section shall conduct a study and submit to the Legislature on or before January 1, 2023, a report evaluating the effectiveness of the pilot programs in that county.

(2) The report to be submitted pursuant to paragraph (1) shall be submitted in compliance with Section 9795 of the Government Code.