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**AB-79 Public social services: higher education.** (2025-2026)

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**Assembly Bill No. 79**

**CHAPTER 607**

An act to amend Section 10006 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to public social services.

[ Approved by Governor October 11, 2025. Filed with Secretary of State October 11, 2025. ]

**LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

AB 79, Arambula. Public social services: higher education.

Existing law establishes the California Community Colleges, under the administration of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges, the California State University, under the administration of the Trustees of the California State University, and the University of California, under the administration of the Regents of the University of California, as segments of public postsecondary education in this state. Existing law establishes community college districts, locations of the California State University, and campuses of the University of California throughout the state.

Existing law requires each California Community College and each California State University campus to designate a staff person as the basic needs coordinator to, among other things, act as a broker in identifying, supporting, and linking students to on- and off-campus housing, food, mental health, and other basic needs services and resources.

Existing law establishes the State Department of Social Services and requires the department and the counties to administer public social services programs. Existing law requires a county human services agency to designate at least one employee as a staff liaison to serve as a point of contact for academic counselors and other professional staff at a campus of an institution of public higher education located within the county. Existing law requires a county human services agency, with input from the public institutions of higher learning in the county, to develop protocols for engagement between the agency and a campus of an institution of public higher education located within the county and encourages those entities to consult with specified stakeholders in the development of those protocols.

This bill would require a county human services agency to additionally receive input from basic needs directors, basic needs coordinators, or designated staff, as specified, when developing the above-described protocols for engagement between the county human services agency and institutions of public higher education. The bill would require the department, in consultation with staff liaisons and basic needs directors or basic needs coordinators, to develop a training with a focus on public social services topics, as specified, to be available for basic needs directors, staff of a campus basic needs center, other designated professional staff from each campus of an institution of higher education, and eligibility workers. The bill would require the department to convene a workgroup to share best practices, address challenges, and identify statewide issues that includes county staff liaisons and representatives from the segments of postsecondary education, as specified. By imposing additional duties on counties, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

This bill would require the department, on or before May 1, 2027, and every 3 years thereafter, to submit a report to the Legislature with findings and recommendations relating to enrollment success trends, best practices, and services offered by the

department that may be available to students attending a campus of an institution of public higher education.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to the statutory provisions noted above.

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

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

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

(1) California's college students face an increasing level of food and housing insecurity. Just over one-half of California students are housing insecure and nearly two-thirds identify as food insecure.

(2) Housing and food insecurity disproportionately impact low-income students, students of color, and adult learners.

(3) Students often have unique eligibility factors that can impact their rejection or acceptances into public social services programs, including, but not limited to, student income, financial aid, and deferred work requirements.

(4) Basic needs and student supports are key to upholding students' dignity, belonging, academic achievement, and professional success.

(b) It is the intent of the Legislature to do both of the following:

(1) Eliminate inconsistency in rejections and acceptances for public social services programs based on student income and work requirements.

(2) Breakdown local silos to share best practices, examine data and trends for success, and promote statewide excellence.

### **SEC. 2.** Section 10006 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

**10006.** (a) A county human services agency shall designate at least one employee as a staff liaison, as provided in this section. The staff liaison shall serve as a point of contact for academic counselors and other relevant professional staff at a campus of an institution of public higher education located within the county and provide information on programs and services offered by the agency that may be available to students attending a campus of an institution of public higher education within the county. This requirement is not intended to supersede or otherwise alter existing relationships between counties and campuses of an institution of public higher education, including, but not limited to, coordination related to CalWORKs welfare-to-work participants who are attending a campus of an institution of public higher education.

(b) A county human services agency subject to this section, with input from the public institutions of higher education located within the county, including basic needs directors, basic needs coordinators, or designated staff from each campus of a public institution of higher education, shall develop protocols for engagement between the agency and a campus of an institution of public higher education located within the county. The agency and the public institutions of higher education located within the county are encouraged to consult stakeholders while developing the protocol, including, but not limited to, all of the following:

(1) A representative from each campus of an institution of public higher education within the county. The representative shall be a staff member tasked with addressing students' basic needs on the campus.

(2) A counselor or other relevant professional staff from each campus of an institution of public higher education within the county.

(3) Relevant organizations representing the interests of students, faculty, and staff from each campus of an institution of public higher education within the county.

(c) Counties are encouraged to provide information to the campuses of an institution of public higher education located within their borders regarding the location and hours of county human services agency public offices, as well as information regarding online and telephone access to program applications. Each campus of an institution of public higher education is encouraged to disseminate information regarding applying for human services programs and benefits to the campus administrator associated with student services or their designee.

(d) The State Department of Social Services shall do all of the following:

(1) In consultation with staff liaisons and basic needs directors, basic needs coordinators, or other designated professional staff from institutions of public higher education within the county, develop a training to be available for basic needs directors, staff of a campus basic needs center, other designated professional staff from each campus of an institution of higher education, and eligibility workers. The training shall focus on public social services topics, including all of the following:

(A) Local Programs that Increase Employability (LPIE) familiarity.

(B) State Department of Health Care Services and State Department of Social Services policy updates, including review of the CalFresh Student Eligibility Handbook.

(C) Other college student related training, including information related to financial aid, scholarships, dependent status, eligibility criteria for public social services programs, and other information related to the needs specific to college students.

(2) Convene a workgroup that meets quarterly to share best practices, address challenges, and identify statewide issues, comprised of all of the following:

(A) At least 12 county staff liaisons, comprised of at least 2 county staff liaisons from each of the six regions of the California Statewide Automated Welfare System (CalSAWS) consortium.

(B) At least four college campus basic needs directors, basic needs coordinators, or other designated campus staff from multiple regions and campuses.

(C) At least one staff member from each higher education segment, including, but not limited to:

(i) The office of the Chancellor of the California State University.

(ii) The office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges.

(iii) The office of the President of the University of California if a representative is provided. The office of the President of the University of California is requested to provide a representative for purposes of this workgroup.

(D) The Center for Healthy Communities at California State University, Chico.

(E) Relevant stakeholders as needed to share best practices, updates, challenges, or other topics related to programs and services offered by the department that may be available to students attending the campus of an institution of public higher education.

(3) (A) On or before May 1, 2027, and every three years thereafter, in collaboration with stakeholders identified pursuant to this section, submit a report to the Legislature with findings and recommendations relating to enrollment success trends, best practices, and services offered by the department that may be available to students attending a campus of an institution of public higher education.

(B) A report to be submitted pursuant to subparagraph (A) shall be submitted in compliance with Section 9795 of the Government Code.

(e) Any disclosure or sharing of personal information under this section shall be made in compliance with applicable state and federal confidentiality laws.

(f) For purposes of this section, "basic needs coordinator" means a coordinator, as defined in Section 66023.4 or 66023.5 of the Education Code.

(g) For purposes of this section, "public higher education" has the same meaning as in Section 66010 of the Education Code.

(h) Notwithstanding the rulemaking provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act (Chapter 3.5 (commencing with Section 11340) of Part 1 of Division 3 of Title 2 of the Government Code), the State Department of Social Services may implement this section by all-county letters or similar instructions.

**SEC. 3.** If the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made pursuant to Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code.