



CHAIRPERSON
John Ryan

EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Jane Adcock

April 3, 2013

The Honorable Connie Conway
State Capitol Room 3063
Sacramento, CA 95814

**SUBJECT: AB 1264 (Conway) Comprehensive school safety plans:
Tactical response plans. (Amended March 21, 2013)
- OPPOSE**

Dear Assembly Member Conway:

The California Mental Health Planning Council (Council) is a majority direct consumer and family member advisory body under federal and state mandate to provide information and feedback on issues affecting the quality and delivery of mental health services across the life span in the state.

We are writing to voice our strong opposition to the section on page 7 of the text of AB 1264 that references the need for a *"protocol for teachers to provide notification of pupils identified as having a potential mental health issue that is likely to result in violence or harm to the pupil or others"*. Not only do we believe it is impractical and unrealistic to require a teacher to diagnose a student, we strongly object to the characterization of mental illness as a predictor of violence.

Students who perpetrate harm or violence to others in schools are more likely to have other, more common, predictors of violence, such as poverty; prior history of violence; drug and/or alcohol use; association with delinquent peers; poor family functioning; and poor grades in school. Moreover, students who are mentally ill are far more likely to be bullied and victims of violence than perpetrators.

The Council supports protecting students and faculty, and understands the desire to require a school safety plan, but feels that the emphasis on "notification" for a "potential" mental health that is "likely" to result in violence creates stigma and shame that does more harm than good. We feel that requiring mental health first aid training for all faculty and staff, and requiring an educational course component on mental illness for students - that demystifies stereotypes and includes information on available resources - would be much more effective.

The California Mental Health Planning Council respectfully requests that you consider our comments and concerns and remove the reference that requires the protocol for notification of potential mental health issues in students.

Thank you for allowing the California Mental Health Planning Council this opportunity to comment on this issue. If you have any questions or concerns please contact our Executive Officer, Jane Adcock at (916) 319-9343 or via email at jane.adcock@cmhpc.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Barbara Mitchell,
Co-Chair, CMHPC Advocacy Committee

Gail Nickerson,
Co-Chair, CMHPC Advocacy Committee

- Advocacy
- Evaluation
- Inclusion