



LOS ANGELES COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
SACRAMENTO LEGISLATIVE OFFICE

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April 5, 2023

The Honorable Reggie Jones-Sawyer
Assembly Public Safety Committee, Chair
1020 N Street, Room 111
Sacramento, CA 95814

ASSEMBLY BILL 1187 (QUIRK-SILVA)

SPONSOR

Assembly Public Safety Committee

Hearing Date: April 18, 2023

Dear Assembly Member Jones-Sawyer:

The Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office is pleased to sponsor Assembly Bill 1187 (Quirk-Silva).

AB 1187 would clarify that a Certified Child Life Specialist who is certified by the Association of Child Life Professionals who is under the supervision of a licensed mental health provider is an authorized mental health treatment provider and therefore eligible for reimbursement from the Victims of Crime Program.

The Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN) has identified the challenge that agencies face when responding to children who survive and/or witness family violence, child abuse and neglect, and/or have a family member die by homicide or suicide. Many surviving children and family members are overlooked for grief interventions due to a lack of identifying referrals or court orders for grief counseling. These surviving children and families are at risk for negative short- and long-term outcomes due to the trauma, fear, instability, interrupted attachment relationships, grief, and subsequent emotions that arise after witnessing and/or otherwise being impacted by family violence. These Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are well documented and are linked to negative outcomes into adulthood, including but not limited to PTSD, repeating patterns of violence, chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance abuse. ACEs can also negatively impact educational attainment, job opportunities, and earning potential. However, the harm of ACEs can be lessened, through responsive grief and trauma support that builds connection and promotes resilience (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). These children and families are in dire need of grief interventions to lessen suffering, promote resilience, and mitigate the potential for these negative social, emotional, developmental, and behavioral effects over the lifespan.

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Children who witness and/or are bereaved by family violence and other violent acts should receive referrals for support and therapeutic grief-focused interventions from highly skilled and trained professionals, such as Certified Child Life Specialists (CCLS).

A CCLS helps infants, children, youth, and families cope with the stress and uncertainty of acute and chronic illness, injury, trauma, disability, loss, and bereavement. A CCLS provides care and interventions that are family-centered, evidence-based, trauma-informed, and developmentally-psychologically-appropriate. CCLS are equipped and experienced to respond to trauma cases, in emergency departments and intensive care units, where death is a common occurrence, and are well-prepared to provide grief and crisis interventions for family members of all ages, in the face of tragedy. CCLS facilitate grief interventions that seek to lessen the trauma of loss, including but not limited to emotional support and companionship, developmentally-appropriate education about death, memory-making and legacy-building activities, identification and rehearsal of coping strategies, and connection to community resources.

Most professionals are not specifically trained for the difficult conversations that arise and are necessary when supporting children and family members dealing with trauma and death. Multi-agency professionals who respond to these cases, may find it very difficult, uncomfortable, overwhelming, or at a loss for words or actions in the moment. The education of many professionals is specific to their career choice and does not generally include supporting bereaved, traumatized, and brokenhearted children and family members. When children enter the system, whether it be Child Protective Services, Law Enforcement, Dependency or Criminal Court, the need for grief counseling may be overlooked due to the many other pending challenges and competing priorities at the time.

Unfortunately today the California Victim Compensation Board does not include a CCLS on the list of authorized mental health treatment providers and therefore valuable services provided by a CCLS is not reimbursable from the Victims of Crime Program.

AB 1187 address this gap in existing law by authorizing a CCLS certified by the Association of Child Life Professionals who is under the supervision of a licensed mental health provider to seek reimbursement for their services subject to the limits set by the California Victims of Crime Program. Nothing in AB 1187 expands the number of types of victims eligible who qualify for services from the Victims of Crime Program, it merely allows a CCLS to seek reimbursement for services provided to otherwise eligible victims.

A CCLS is required to have a Bachelor's degree, with many possessing a Master's degree while meeting specific, rigorous academic requirements, such as coursework and a core foundation in child development, family systems, therapeutic play, grief, loss, and coping. In addition, clinical requirements including a 600-hour internship and the passing of the Child Life Professional

Certification exam, establishes a level of comprehension and verifies a master of critical Child Life knowledge (Association of Child Life Professionals, 2021).

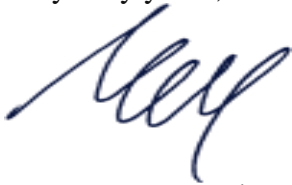
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The services provided by a CCLS are a valuable tool for reducing some of the adverse childhood experiences that are associated with being a victim/witness to a violent crime.

For these reasons our Office is proud to sponsor AB 1187.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact Daniel Felizzatto in my Sacramento Legislative Office at (916) 442-0668.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gascón", written in a cursive style.

GEORGE GASCÓN
District Attorney

cc: Assembly Member Quirk-Silva
Members, Assembly Public Safety Committee
Liah Burnley, Counsel Assembly Public Safety Committee
Gary Olsen, Counsel Assembly Republican Caucus