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Governor Newsom Signs Assembly Bill 2711 and Senate Bill 997:

Advancing Public Health Approach to Drug Infractions in Schools

Open Doors Training Program Ready to Support Education Partners with These Historic Reforms

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – The signing of Assembly Bill 2711 and Senate Bill 997 by Governor Gavin Newsom marks a transformative moment for California’s schools, ushering in a new era where drug- related infractions will be addressed through harm reduction and a public health approach rather than ineffective punitive measures such as suspensions and expulsions.

Authored by Assemblymember James C. Ramos, Assembly Bill 2711 requires local education agencies to adopt policies that prioritize support and intervention over disciplinary action, ensuring that students grappling with substance use challenges receive the help they need. Senate Bill 997, introduced by Senator Anthony Portantino, allows students in middle and high schools to carry FDA-approved naloxone or other opioid antagonists for emergency overdose reversal. The bill also mandates that school's stock and distribute fentanyl test strips and provide training for students on their use.

These legislative victories align seamlessly with the mission of the Open Doors Training Program, which can equip adults who interact with youth—including school staff—with the tools to recognize early signs of substance use and provide timely, compassionate support.

"We are thrilled to see this critical shift in how schools approach drug-related incidents. The passage of Assembly Bill 2711 and Senate Bill 997 lays the groundwork for Open Doors to work even more closely with educators and school staff, offering them the training necessary to

understand and respond to substance use among students from a health-first perspective," said Robb Layne, Executive Director of the California Association of Alcohol and Drug Program Executives (CAADPE).

As part of the Open Doors Training initiative, funded by the California Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI), adults who work directly with or interact with youth, like school personnel, will have access to specialized training designed to help them navigate the complexities of substance use among young people. This training equips educators and youth-serving professionals with the knowledge and tools they need to foster supportive environments where students receive compassionate guidance and care, shifting the focus from punitive measures to promoting overall well-being.

"The signing of Assembly Bill 2711 and Senate Bill 997 highlights the critical importance for schools to adopt a compassionate, health-focused approach to addressing substance use among students," said Christine Stoner-Mertz, CEO of the CA Alliance, and Catalyst Center. "Open Doors Training can provide the resources and education necessary for school staff to effectively support their students during these critical moments."

With youth opioid misuse and overdose deaths on the rise in California, the stocking of naloxone and fentanyl test strips, along with proper training, is more crucial than ever.

Chuck Ingoglia, President and CEO of the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, commented, "By aligning with the frameworks of Assembly Bill 2711 and Senate Bill 997, Open Doors will ensure that schools are equipped with a proactive, supportive approach to substance use, shifting the focus from punishment to recovery. Together, we can transform the lives of California's youth."

The Open Doors Training website will serve as a central hub for information, providing updates on the development of the training program, resources for those working with youth, and avenues for community involvement. Visit opendoorstraining.org to stay informed and be part of this vital effort. Visit the Open Doors website [HERE](#).