

2015-112 AUDIT SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

Mental Health Services for Students

The audit by the California State Auditor will provide independently developed and verified information related to school districts' and special education local plan areas' (SELPA) use of mental health funds and provision of mental health services to students, and will include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Review and evaluate the laws, rules, and regulations significant to the audit objectives.
2. Review and evaluate the California Department of Education's responsibilities with respect to the oversight and administration of federal and state special education law as it relates to mental health issues. Determine whether the State is complying with relevant laws, regulations, and policies in monitoring funding streams and outcomes for students with mental health issues.
3. Review and evaluate the impact on the number of students with disabilities placed in residential programs both in-state and out-of-state, prior to and after the enactment of Assembly Bill 114 (AB 114). To the extent possible, provide information on the reasons students are placed in these programs, and determine whether those reasons have changed over a five-year period.
4. From a selection of at least four SELPAs, review and assess the complaint process and determine whether each SELPA's process is effective, including whether the SELPA makes parents, guardians, and students aware of the complaint process. Further, for a selection of complaints from each of the SELPAs, determine whether the process for addressing complaints was followed.
5. For a five-year period, using the SELPAs identified in objective 4, provide the following information, to the extent possible, disaggregated by students for whom an individualized education plan (IEP) identifies them as emotionally disturbed, for students whose IEP may also call for mental health services, and for students receiving mental health services who qualify or do not qualify for Medi-Cal services:
 - a. Compare the number of students each SELPA served under Assembly Bill 3632 (AB 3632) to the number served under AB 114.
 - b. Determine whether the type and frequency of service, and the providers of services, changed under the transition from AB 3632 to AB 114.
 - c. For a selection of students served under AB 3632, determine whether their IEPs were changed as the result of the SELPAs' transition to AB 114. To the extent possible, assess whether the IEP changes were allowable and the reason was documented.
6. To the extent possible, determine whether changes in treatment were made by service providers as a result of the transition from the AB 3632 to the AB 114 process.

7. Determine whether the State has a mechanism in place to evaluate the transition from AB 3632 to AB 114.
8. Identify state and federal funding sources for mental health services for students with disabilities for the past five fiscal years. Further, for the SELPAs selected for objective 4 and from a selection of local educational agencies (LEAs), compare their mental health budgets to their costs. Determine the source of funds the SELPAs used to pay for any excess mental health costs.
9. For the selection of LEAs identified in objective 8, review and assess the following:
 - a. Each LEA's process for hiring mental health services staff, including how each LEA ensures the staff are qualified. In addition, for LEAs that contract for services, determine the qualifications of the mental health services providers, identify who the providers are, and determine who is responsible for contracting these services. To the extent possible, compare the qualifications of licensed and nonlicensed LEA employees and contracted services providers (that is, nurses, therapists, psychologists, etc.).
 - b. Review and assess each LEA's process for identifying students needing a special education assessment for mental health services, including the criteria for denying an assessment for mental health services.
 - c. Review and assess how each LEA measures and tracks the outcomes for students receiving mental health services.
10. To the extent possible, compare the number of students with diagnosed mental health issues in California to the number of students actually receiving services as part of an IEP.
11. Review and assess any other issues that are significant to mental health services to students.