



California's Protection & Advocacy System
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FACT SHEET: Medicaid/Medi-Cal Cuts Will Hurt Schools and Special Education

September 2017, Pub #F105.01

How Will Medi-Cal/Medicaid Cuts Hurt Special Education?

Today, schools in California use **\$180 million** in Medi-Cal/Medicaid to pay for services to students, especially students with disabilities. **More than \$90 million of this money comes from the federal government.** Recent proposals in Congress would cut or cap these federal Medicaid funds.

Schools often use Medi-Cal funds to pay for the services in a child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). For children who qualify, Medi-Cal helps fund special education services such as:

- occupational and physical therapy,
- nursing,
- mental health and
- classroom aides

Medi-Cal also pays for walkers, wheelchairs, special playground equipment and assistive technology for students with disabilities.

Schools also use Medi-Cal to pay for school nurses and psychologists, and school-based primary and preventive services, such as vision and hearing screening for all students.

How Will Medi-Cal/Medicaid Cuts Hurt Our Schools?

Lower Student Achievement. Research shows us that students covered by Medicaid or other health insurance are more likely to attend school regularly, graduate from high school, and complete college than students

without access to health care. They make higher wages and live longer, healthier lives. Capping Medi-Cal/Medicaid dollars could leave some low-income and disabled children out of the program—and out of the loop for success.

Higher Absent rates and Dropout Rates: Illness is the No. 1 reason students miss school. Cutting Medi-Cal/Medicaid could mean more children stay home sick with uncontrolled asthma, toothaches, and other ailments instead of getting the care they need. Research shows that students who are chronically absent have weaker social skills in kindergarten, poorer reading in third grade, and higher dropout rates in high school. And this could hurt local school budgets twice, since lower attendance leads to lower state funding formulas.

Drops in Early Screening and Treatment: Schools and community organizations now depend on Medicaid's doctor-recommended Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) program to identify and treat children with hearing and vision problems, developmental delays, and disabilities such as autism that can affect learning. **Cutting Medicaid could undermine EPSDT, leaving children with undiagnosed and untreated learning and developmental issues;** thwarting early education initiatives aimed at getting all children ready for kindergarten; and weakening broader efforts to ensure every child masters reading by the end of third grade.

Fewer Mental Health Resources: 7 out of 10 students who get mental health services receive these services at school. Often, these school-based counseling services are funded by Medicaid EPSDT.

Disability Rights California is funded by a variety of sources, for a complete list of funders, go to <http://www.disabilityrightsca.org/Documents/ListofGrantsAndContracts.html>.