

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Educators Lead the Way in Mandated Reporting Reform

*A Roadmap Informed by AB 2085
Implementation in Los Angeles County*



**Los Angeles County
Office of Education**



LA COUNTY MANDATED
SUPPORTING INITIATIVE



GREATER LOS ANGELES
EDUCATION FOUNDATION



Executive Summary

California's child welfare system receives more than 400,000 reports each year. Nearly 90% of those reports are unsubstantiated, with many reflecting families struggling with poverty rather than abuse or neglect. Black and Brown families bear the greatest burden, with a disproportionate number of families of color being investigated by child protective services before reaching adulthood. The default response for these families is often investigation, and in too many cases, family separation. As a result, child welfare agencies spend enormous capacity investigating families who need support, not intervention. Connecting those families to community resources is both more effective and less harmful than a report to child welfare.

Why Schools Must Lead Mandated Reporting Reform

Educators are uniquely positioned at this intersection of children, families, and community systems. They account for 1 in 4 reports to child protective services across California. In Los Angeles County, that figure is 24% of all reports, with only 8% of those being substantiated. Educators work closely with children and families and have the best interest of the child in mind, however educators often default to reporting rather than connecting families to support due to legal pressures as mandated reporters and limited alternatives.

California Assembly Bill 2085, signed into law in 2022, provides educators with a critical “third option” to support families without defaulting to reporting. AB 2085 revised the definition of general neglect under the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act to explicitly exclude a parent's economic disadvantage and to require a substantial risk of serious physical harm before a report is warranted. The law gives educators a legal and practical basis for supporting families rather than escalating to child welfare, encouraging a shift from “mandated reporting” to “mandated supporting”.

Since educators make up a sizable portion of reports to child welfare, schools are central to reform efforts.

Schools are where children spend the majority of their waking hours, and where families build relationships with the adults who know their kids best. Educators see the early signs of instability—a child who comes to school hungry, exhausted, or withdrawn—often before anyone else does. That proximity is an asset, as educators can identify need, build trust, and connect families to support before a situation escalates to the point of a child welfare report.

Leveraging educators' proximity to children and families, Los Angeles County moved quickly to implement AB 2085. The May 2023 Board of Supervisors motion "Evolving from Mandated Reporter to Mandated Supporter" formalized the Mandated Supporting Initiative (MSI) and directed a countywide response, including standardized training and community-based pathways for families who need support. The Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) partnered with MSI to build and deploy the state's first AB 2085-aligned training, a decision-support tool for assessing when to report versus support, and a Family Resource Finder to connect families to services.



FOR COMPLETE FINDINGS, DATA, AND IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE, PLEASE REFER TO THE FULL REPORT:

[Educators Lead the Way in Mandated Reporting Reform: A Roadmap Informed by AB 2085 Implementation in Los Angeles County.](#)

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Learnings

To understand what implementation looks like on the ground, LACOE conducted a series of Listening Sessions in 2026 with four Local Education Agencies: Inglewood Unified, Lynwood Unified, Lawndale Elementary, and Vaughn Next Century Learning Center. The findings point to a three-stage framework for reform:

Changing Practice.

Training must go beyond compliance. Educators need applied, scenario-based learning that builds the confidence to pause, assess, and consult rather than default to a report. Making consultation pathways explicit and accessible is essential, with school social workers and case managers being the first line of support.

Shifting Systems.

Training takes hold when leadership commits to it. Local Education Agencies with the strongest early results have superintendents and site leadership who treat reform as a district priority. Data on reporting patterns, particularly racial disparities in who gets reported, is a consistent motivator for action. Schools also need tangible resources to back up that commitment like access to food resources, housing referrals, and mental health services. Community Schools, with their integrated service infrastructure, are particularly well-positioned to support this work.

Sustaining Change.

Board resolutions, aligned administrative regulations, and training embedded in HR onboarding are what prevent reform from fading. To ensure success in reform implementation, it is essential to identify internal champions and to secure stable, dedicated funding to keep the support structures in place.



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Recommendations

The findings from the Listening Sessions point directly to three recommendations for counties implementing AB 2085:

Training-level Practice:

Deliver training through scenarios and discussion, with built-in reinforcements, debriefs, refreshers, and opportunities to apply the material after the initial session. Normalize "pause and assess" as standard practice, and give staff the language and tools to make real-time decisions with confidence. Reducing the fear-driven instinct to report first and ask questions later starts with training that prepares educators to do something different.

School-site Structures:

Define the consultation pathway and make it visible to every staff member, ensuring staff know who to call first. Establish internal workflows that guide accurate and equitable decision-making before a report is ever made. Ensure school social workers and case management professionals are accessible for real-time consultation. Make support options easy for staff and families to find and activate.

System-level Change:

Embed AB 2085 training into HR onboarding and required training infrastructure so it reaches every staff member at every level. Align board policy and administrative regulations with the law's training guidance, decision-support tools, and community support pathways. Stabilize funding for the staffing and resources that make "supporting" the new default. Strengthen cross-system data sharing so schools know what happens after a report is made and can adjust their practice accordingly.

Conclusion

Los Angeles County developed these recommendations from on-the-ground implementation experience, and they have statewide applicability. County education offices, school districts, and policymakers across California can draw directly on this framework as they build or refine their own AB 2085 implementation efforts.

As the state's largest county and an early driver of AB 2085 implementation, Los Angeles County has generated concrete, on-the-ground experience that other counties are building toward. The findings in this brief are designed to accelerate that work statewide, offering county education offices, school districts, and policymakers a practical roadmap grounded in what educators have actually experienced.