

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center

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By: Hinojosa  
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### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

During the transition from childhood to adulthood, adolescents often fail to receive regular primary health care screenings and treatment that could greatly improve their current and future health. Many adolescents are adversely affected by serious health and safety issues, such as motor vehicle crashes, violence, and substance abuse. They also struggle to adopt behaviors that could decrease their risk of developing chronic diseases in adulthood--behaviors such as eating nutritiously, engaging in physical activity, and choosing not to use tobacco. A number of environmental factors, such as family, peer group, school, and community characteristics, contribute to the challenges that adolescents face.

Adolescence is a critical time for developing positive habits and skills that can lead to healthy behaviors over an individual's lifetime. The Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council conducted a study that found that one important factor in designing an adolescent health service is the focus on prevention of disease. One of the conclusions of the study was that "prevention, early intervention and timely treatment improve the health status for adolescents, prepare them for healthy adulthood, and decrease the incidence of many chronic diseases in adulthood."

In the past few years, immunizations have been licensed to provide protection for teens against such illnesses as meningococcal infections, pertussis, or whooping cough, and cervical cancer. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices specifically recommends the use of FDA-approved vaccines for pertussis, tetanus, and meningitis, in adolescents. A national survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found, however, that immunization coverage levels among adolescents in 2006 failed to meet the Healthy People 2010 objective of 90 percent coverage for youth aged 13 through 15 for any of the vaccines measured.

Numerous organizations have emphasized the importance of routine screenings and inoculations in promoting the health of adolescents. The Society for Adolescent Medicine has found that adolescent well physicals are one of the most effective of preventive care tools for ensuring continued health from childhood to adulthood and that adolescents who regularly visit a primary care physician are less likely to visit emergency rooms and have preventable hospitalizations and are more likely to receive recommended immunizations and other evidence-based health care services.

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) is the agency responsible for the implementation of the Adolescent Health Program, which maintains a comprehensive and holistic view of adolescents' health and well-being and provides information on adolescent health through consultation, technical assistance, and educational presentations to local, state, public, and private agencies. In addition, DSHS is the agency that houses the Texas Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention Program, the Texas Asthma Control Program, the Immunization Branch, and the School Health Program, all of which have a significant, positive impact on the health and well-being of adolescent Texans.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) provides education to children and parents about healthy practices and behaviors through the curriculum it requires for health, fitness, and life skills courses, as well as through the activity of the TEA Division of Health and Safety, which provides coordination, leadership, policy development, and implementation assistance for specific state and federal requirements and programs that emphasize providing students with opportunities to achieve their maximum potential for a safe and healthy lifestyle.

Additionally, the Health Resources and Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has developed, in conjunction with the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Bright Futures initiative, which provides a set of guidelines for adolescent care, including recommendations on immunizations and routine health screenings. For its part, the CDC has launched a national campaign to raise awareness about adolescent health and immunizations.

Parents' awareness of the need for adolescent well visits is a crucial factor in determining whether their children receive routine health care and preventive treatment.

### **RESOLVED**

That the 81st Legislature of the State of Texas hereby express its support of efforts to improve adolescent health by educating parents about the fundamental importance of adolescents receiving regular physical exams and updated immunizations.

That the 81st Legislature direct the Texas Department of State Health Services and the Texas Education Agency and all other state agencies that provide information, services, or support to adolescent Texans or their parents to seek out opportunities to educate them as to the importance of these exams and of acquiring recommended immunizations and the positive impact that these measures will have on adolescents' long-term health and well-being.

That the Texas secretary of state forward an official copy of this resolution to the commissioner of the Texas Department of State Health Services and the commissioner of education.