

Date of Hearing: March 20, 2024

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
Al Muratsuchi, Chair  
AB 2053 (Mathis) – As Introduced February 1, 2024

**SUBJECT:** Pupil instruction: abusive relationships

**SUMMARY:** Requires that instruction about adolescent relationship abuse and intimate partner violence include the resources available to students related to adolescent relationship abuse and intimate partner violence, including the National Domestic Violence Hotline and local domestic violence hotlines that provide confidential support services for students that have experienced domestic violence or stalking, and that are available by telephone 24 hours a day.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Requires that students in grades 7 to 12, inclusive, receive instruction at least once in junior high or middle school and once in high school about adolescent relationship abuse and intimate partner violence, including the early warning signs thereof. (Education Code (EC) 51934)
- 2) Requires, as part of comprehensive sexual health education, that local educational agencies (LEAs) and charter schools provide students with information on local resources for assistance with sexual assault and intimate partner violence. (EC 51934)
- 3) Requires public schools, including charter schools, and private schools, that serve students in any of grades 7 to 12, and public and private institutions of higher education that issue pupil or student identification cards, to print the telephone number for the National Domestic Violence Hotline and local domestic violence hotlines on those identification cards. (EC 215.5)
- 4) Requires the California Department of Education (CDE) to post on its website resources on teen dating violence prevention, local and national hotlines and services for youth experiencing teen dating violence, and other relevant sources for parents, guardians, and other caretakers of students. (EC 231.7)
- 5) Requires that, when the health education framework is revised after January 1, 2017, the Instructional Quality Commission (IQC) consider including comprehensive information for kindergarten and grades 1 to 8, inclusive, on the development of healthy relationships, which is age and developmentally appropriate and consistent with the health education standards adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE). (EC 33546)
- 6) States that, for purposes of this section, the “development of healthy relationships” includes, but is not limited to:
  - a) Understanding the principles of treating one another with respect, dignity, and kindness;
  - b) Demonstrating the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to address and resolve disagreement and conflict; and

- c) Recognizing when and how to respond to dangerous or other situations that may result in the bullying, harassment, harming, or hurting of another person. (EC 33546)
- 7) Requires that, when the health education framework is revised after January 1, 2016, the Instructional Quality Commission (IQC) consider including comprehensive information for grades 9 to 12, inclusive, on sexual harassment and violence that includes, but is not limited to, all of the following:
- a) Information on different forms of sexual harassment and violence, including instances that occur among peers and in a dating relationship; a discussion of prevention strategies; how students report sexual harassment and violence; and potential resources victims can access;
  - b) Discussion of the affirmative consent standard, as defined, and skills students may use to establish boundaries in peer and dating relationships; and
  - c) Discussion of legal aspects of sexual harassment and violence under state and federal law. (EC 33544)
- 8) Requires that, if the governing board of a school district requires a course in health education for graduation from high school, the governing board of the school district include instruction in sexual harassment and violence, including, but not limited to, information on the affirmative consent standard, as defined.
- 9) Requires that, if the governing board of a school district provides instruction on sexual harassment and violence, it ensure teachers consult information related to sexual harassment and violence in the health education framework when delivering health instruction. (EC 51225.36)
- 10) Requires that when the health education framework is next revised after January 1, 2015, the IQC consider including a distinct category on sexual abuse and sex trafficking prevention education that includes, but is not limited to, all of the following:
- a) Information on different forms of sexual abuse and assault; discussion of prevention strategies; how to report sexual abuse or suspected sexual abuse; and local resources for victims;
  - b) Discussion of healthy boundaries for relationships; how to recognize potentially harmful and abusive relationships; and refusal skills to overcome peer pressure and to avoid high-risk activities;
  - c) Information on sex trafficking and risk factors; the recruiting tactics of sex traffickers and peer recruiters, including recruitment through the internet; how to report sex trafficking or suspected sex trafficking; and local resources for victims;
  - d) Discussion of legal aspects of sexual abuse and sex trafficking under state and federal laws; and

- e) Discussion of how culture and mass media influence and desensitize our perceptions of sexual abuse and sex trafficking, including, but not limited to, stereotypes and myths about the victims and abusers, victim blaming, and the role of language. Requires that this instruction emphasize compassion for people who have suffered from sexual abuse or sex trafficking, and support positive reentry experiences for survivors returning to school. (EC 33545)
- 11) Authorizes a school district to provide sexual abuse and sex trafficking prevention education, defined as instruction on the prevalence and nature of sexual abuse and sex trafficking, strategies to reduce their risk, techniques to set healthy boundaries, and how to safely report an incident.
- 12) States that a parent or guardian of a student has the right to excuse his or her child from all or part of sexual abuse and sex trafficking prevention education, and assessments related to that education.
- 13) Authorizes the CDE to make available on its website resources on sexual abuse and sex trafficking prevention for professional learning purposes, and relevant materials for parents and guardians of students.
- 14) Encourages schools to collaborate with law enforcement on intervention programs for high-risk students and minors.
- 15) Authorizes in-service training to be conducted periodically to enable school district personnel to learn about new developments in the understanding of sexual abuse and sex trafficking, and to receive instruction on current prevention efforts and methods. (EC 51950)

**FISCAL EFFECT:** This bill has been keyed a possible state-mandated local program by the Office of Legislative Counsel.

**COMMENTS:**

***Need for the bill.*** The author states, “AB 2053 is bipartisan measure to address a rising issue facing many students, and ensures that the most vulnerable and susceptible students are provided with the resources to break a cycle of abuse and receive the treatment, support and care that they need and deserve.”

***National Domestic Violence Hotline number is already required to be on student identification cards.*** This bill would require that instruction about adolescent relationship abuse and intimate partner violence include the National Domestic Violence Hotline and local domestic violence hotlines that provide confidential support services for students that have experienced domestic violence or stalking and are available by telephone 24 hours a day.

Current law already requires that students learn about this content and requires that the national and local domestic violence hotlines be printed on the back of student identification cards in grades 7 through 12.

***Adolescent relationship abuse, intimate partner violence content is already required instruction to be provided to each student twice.*** This bill would require that instruction about

adolescent relationship abuse and intimate partner violence include the resources available to students related to adolescent relationship abuse and intimate partner violence

As noted above, current law already requires:

- Students in grades 7 to 12, inclusive, receive instruction at least once in junior high or middle school and once in high school about adolescent relationship abuse and intimate partner violence, including the early warning signs thereof; and
- As part of comprehensive sexual health education, that LEAs and charter schools provide students with information on local resources for assistance with sexual assault and intimate partner violence. (EC 51934)

Additionally, the health education framework adopted by the SBE in 2019 contains a significant amount of content on healthy relationships, teen dating violence, and sex trafficking.

In the chapter for grades 7-8, the Framework contains an extensive discussion of healthy relationships, dating violence, and sex trafficking, which includes a sample lesson on dating violence. In the chapter for grades 9-12, the Framework states:

One in three teens will experience teen dating violence, and many do not report or even recognize their experience as abuse. Students can research domestic violence and teen dating violence to learn more about its prevalence and impact and resources for support for themselves or others.

It is important for students to understand that relationship abuse or intimate partner violence impacts people of all genders and sexual orientations, and is about one person having power and control over another. It is not limited to physical violence. Different forms of abuse are meant to control the person being targeted. Coercive control is a pattern of behavior which seeks to take away the victim's liberty or freedom and to strip away their sense of self. Through further discussion and research, students can assess characteristics of harmful or abusive relationships (9–12.7.5.S), including the six forms of relationship abuse.

Students may benefit from more anonymous online resources, such as the Love is Respect website of the National Domestic Violence Hotline. Students may also benefit from making a connection with helpful people and resources in the community. Inform students that many services available at domestic violence agencies, youth service agencies, and suicide prevention hotlines and organizations are confidential and do not require parental consent to access (e.g., counseling and support hotlines). Invite a local domestic violence agency to present information about dating violence and locally available resources and services. Information about domestic violence organizations can be an important resource for students who are exposed to abusive adult relationships. These agencies are usually experienced in providing presentations to youth and can help facilitate discussion about the issue. They can also provide safety planning information and counseling services for students who are in an unhealthy or dangerous situation.

The Health Education Content Standards adopted by the SBE in 2008 also include several standards related to teen dating violence:

Grades 7-8:

- 5.1.S: Use a decision-making process to examine risky social and dating situations.
- 5.2.S: Apply a decision-making process to avoid potentially dangerous situations, such as gang activities, violence in dating, and other social situations.
- 7.5.M: Demonstrate skills to avoid or escape from potentially violent situations, including dating.

Grades 9-12:

- 1.2.S Recognize potentially harmful or abusive relationships, including dangerous dating situations.

Finally, CDE is required to post on its website resources on teen dating violence prevention, local and national hotlines and services for youth experiencing teen dating violence, and other relevant sources for parents, guardians, and other caretakers of students.

The author notes that while this instruction is mandated to be provided twice, is included in the Health curriculum, and information on national and local domestic violence hotlines is required to be printed on student identification cards, there is no requirement in current law that instruction include information on these hotlines.

***Prevalence of teen dating violence.*** Research indicates that teen dating violence is experienced and perpetrated by a significant number of students:

- Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC’s) Youth Risk Behavior Survey in 2019 indicate that among U.S. high school students who reported dating during the 12 months before the survey, about 1 in 12 experienced physical dating violence and about 1 in 12 experienced sexual dating violence.
- Data from the CDC’s Youth Risk Behavior Survey show that teens experiencing teen dating violence were more likely to report carrying a weapon at school, missing school because they felt unsafe, being threatened or injured with a weapon on school property, having a physical fight at school, and being bullied on school property. (Vivolo-Kantor, 2016)
- According to the CDC, intimate partner violence often begins in adolescence. An estimated 8.5 million women in the U.S. (7%) and over 4 million men (4%) reported experiencing physical violence, rape or stalking from an intimate partner in their lifetime and indicated that they first experienced these or other forms of violence by that partner before the age of 18. (CDC, 2017)
- In one study of survey data from 2,895 middle school students in four U.S. cities, 77% reported perpetrating verbal/emotional abuse, 32% reported perpetrating physical abuse, 20% reported threatening a partner, 15% reported perpetrating sexual abuse, 13% reported perpetrating relational abuse, and 6% reported stalking. (Niolon, 2015)

***National Domestic Violence Hotline.*** This bill requires instruction about adolescent relationship abuse and intimate partner violence include the resources available to students related to

adolescent relationship abuse and intimate partner violence, including the National Domestic Violence Hotline and local domestic violence hotlines.

The National Domestic Violence Hotline provides support to enable victims to find safety and live lives free of abuse. Callers to the hotline receive support, crisis intervention information, educational services, and referral services. The hotline is a non-profit organization established in 1996 as a component of the federal Violence Against Women Act. As noted above, current law requires that this hotline and any local hotlines be printed on the back of student identification cards.

***Arguments in support.*** The California Women’s Law Center writes, “The California legislature has taken many positive steps to address the issue of adolescent relationship abuse and intimate partner violence. The California Healthy Youth Act requires school districts to ensure that all students in grades 7 to 12 receive comprehensive sexual health education and HIV prevention education. However, while mandated curriculum contains ‘information about adolescent relationship abuse and intimate partner violence, including the early warning signs, there is no requirement for school districts to provide information about the resources available that may assist students if they are experiencing life-altering violence.’”

***Arguments in opposition.*** The Right to Life League writes, “I write to oppose Assembly Bill 2053 entitled ‘Pupil instruction: abusive relationships.’ The bill, if passed, will amend the Education Code to mandate education on abusive relationships, HIV, and other matters as follows: [reference to provision on instruction on legally available pregnancy outcomes in current law]. Abortion does not prevent pregnancy. It is in fact a termination of pregnancy. Abortion is also not a “pregnancy outcome” but rather an artificial method of terminating pregnancy. Therefore, the language of the bill embraces misinformation and will mislead instruction on contraceptive methods. Accordingly, the Right to Life League urges members to amend the bill to remove the word “abortion” to cure this misinformation.”

***Related legislation.*** AB 1071 (Hoover), Chapter 65, Statutes of 2023, requires the CDE to post on its website resources on teen dating violence prevention, local and national hotlines and services for youth experiencing teen dating violence, and other relevant sources for parents, guardians, and other caretakers of students.

SB 316 (Rubio), Chapter 270, Statutes of 2019, requires public schools, including charter schools, and private schools, that serve students in any of grades 7 to 12, and public and private institutions of higher education that issue pupil or student identification cards, to print the telephone number for the National Domestic Violence Hotline and local domestic violence hotlines on those identification cards.

AB 643 (Frazier), Chapter 574, Statutes of 2017, requires that content on the early warning signs of adolescent relationship abuse and intimate partner violence be included in mandated sexual health instruction.

SB 1435 (Jackson) Chapter 633, Statutes of 2016, requires, when the health curriculum framework is next revised after January 1, 2017, the IQC to consider including comprehensive information for kindergarten and grades 1 to 8, inclusive, on the development of healthy relationships, as specified.

SB 592 (Leyva) of the 2015-16 Session would have required school districts to provide educational programs that promote healthy relationships and prevent adolescent relationship abuse to students in grades 6-12, required the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to provide information for use by schools, and required school safety plans to include procedures and policies to prevent and respond to adolescent relationship abuse. SB 592 was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

AB 329 (Weber), Chapter 398, Statutes of 2015, makes instruction in sexual health education a requirement, revises HIV prevention education content, expands topics covered in sexual health education, requires this instruction to be inclusive of different sexual orientations, and clarifies parental consent policy.

SB 695 (de Leon), Chapter 424, Statutes of 2015, requires the IQC to consider adding content to the health curriculum framework for grades 9-12 on sexual harassment and violence, including the affirmative consent standard, and requires school districts which require a health course for graduation to include this content.

AB 1227 (Bonta), Chapter 558, Statutes of 2017, establishes the Human Trafficking Prevention Education and Training Act, which allows schools to provide training on human trafficking, and makes changes to the Commercially Sexually Exploited Children Program by, among other things, including educational entities among the groups with whom a county must collaborate, as specified.

SB 1165 (Mitchell), Chapter 713, Statutes of 2014, requires the IQC to consider including sexual abuse and sex trafficking prevention education in the health framework when it is next revised.

#### **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

##### **Support**

California Women's Law Center

##### **Opposition**

Right to Life League

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