

Date of Hearing: April 22, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Darshana R. Patel, Chair
AB 1626 (Gabriel) – As Amended April 8, 2026

[Note: This bill was double referred from the Assembly Arts, Entertainment, Sports & Tourism Committee and was heard by that Committee as it relates to issues under its jurisdiction.]

SUBJECT: Interscholastic athletics: youth sports: coaches: behavioral and mental health training

SUMMARY: Establishes training content areas for interscholastic athletic coaches and youth sports organization coaches. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires the interscholastic athletic coaches training, as added by AB 1665 (Pacheco) of the 2025–26 Session, to cover, but not be limited to, all of the following topics:
 - a) Substantive awareness of behavioral and mental health challenges specific to pupil athletes, including, but not limited to, performance anxiety, injury-related behavioral and mental health impacts, and the pressures of competition and recruitment;
 - b) Trauma-informed care and recognizing signs and symptoms of common behavioral and mental health conditions in adolescents, including, but not limited to, suicide risk and prevention, crisis deescalation, mental distress, anxiety, depression, self-harm, substance use disorder, and eating disorders;
 - c) Awareness of behavioral and mental health challenges specific to pupil athletes, including, but not limited to, performance anxiety, injury-related behavioral and mental health impacts, and the pressures of competition and recruitment;
 - d) Strategies for creating a positive team culture that promotes behavioral and mental well-being, reduces stigma around behavioral and mental health, and encourages help-seeking behavior among pupil athletes;
 - e) Appropriate communication techniques for approaching and supporting pupil athletes who may be experiencing behavioral and mental health difficulties;
 - f) Procedures for referring pupil athletes to appropriate mental health resources, including school counselors, psychologists, and community behavioral and mental health services; and
 - g) Understanding of the coach’s role and limitations in supporting pupil behavioral and mental health, including, but not limited to, ethical boundaries and the importance of professional behavioral and mental health care.
- 2) States that this measure does not permit coaches to provide mental health counseling or therapy, or to substitute for the services of licensed behavioral and mental health

professionals. States the purpose of the training is to enhance coaches' awareness and ability to recognize potential mental health concerns and connect pupil athletes with appropriate professional resources.

- 3) Requires on or before September 1, 2027, the California Department of Education (CDE) to identify existing training or develop a model youth athletics behavioral and mental health training for coaches in youth sports organizations, both for recreational leagues and competitive or club leagues. States the training shall cover, but not be limited to, all of the following topics:
 - a) Strategies for creating a positive team culture that promotes healthy behavioral and mental well-being;
 - b) Protective factors that promote youth resilience, well-being, and positive mental health;
 - c) Awareness of behavioral and mental health challenges specific to youth athletes;
 - d) Recognition of signs and symptoms of common behavioral and mental health conditions in youth and adolescents;
 - e) Appropriate communication techniques for approaching and supporting youth athletes who may be experiencing behavioral and mental health difficulties;
 - f) Appropriate referral pathways, including how to connect youth and families to school-based behavioral health services, community-based organizations, crisis support, and emergency resources when necessary; and
 - g) Understanding of the coach's role and limitations in supporting youth athletes' behavioral and mental health, including ethical boundaries and the importance of professional behavioral and mental health care.
- 4) Requires the CDE to post the training identified or developed on its internet website and work with local partners to disseminate the training to appropriate youth athletic leagues, youth coaching entities, and relevant statewide organizations and associations.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the California High School Coaching Education and Training Program and states it is the intent of the Legislature that the program be administered by school districts, be updated and rehearsed annually, and emphasize the following components:
 - a) Development of coaching philosophies consistent with school, school district, and governing board of a school district goals;
 - b) Sport psychology: emphasizing communication, reinforcement of the efforts of pupils, effective delivery of coaching regarding technique, and motivation of the pupil athlete;
 - c) Sport pedagogy: how pupil athletes learn, and how to teach sport skills;

- d) Sport physiology: principles of training, fitness for sport, development of a training program, nutrition for athletes, and the harmful effects associated with the use of steroids and performance-enhancing dietary supplements by adolescents;
 - e) Sport management: team management, risk management, and working within the context of an entire school program;
 - f) Training: certification in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), use of an automated external defibrillator (AED), and first aid that includes, but is not limited to, training in recognizing the signs and symptoms of, and responding to, concussions, heat illness, and cardiac arrest. Concussion, heat illness, and cardiac arrest training may be provided by entities offering free, online, or other types of training courses;
 - g) Knowledge of, and adherence to, statewide rules and regulations, as well as school regulations, including, but not necessarily limited to, eligibility, gender equity, and discrimination; and
 - h) Sound planning and goal setting. (Education Code (EC) 35179.1)
- 2) Requires the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) to report to the appropriate policy committees of the Legislature and the Governor on its evaluation and accountability activities on or before January 1, 2023, and on or before January 1 every seven years thereafter. Requires the report to include, but not be limited to, the goals and objectives of the CIF with regard to, and the status of, all of the following:
- a) The governing structure of the CIF, and the effectiveness of that governance structure in providing leadership for interscholastic athletics in secondary schools;
 - b) Methods to facilitate communication with agencies, organizations, and public entities whose functions and interests interface with the CIF;
 - c) The quality of coaching and officiating, including, but not limited to, professional development for coaches and athletic administrators, and parent education programs;
 - d) Gender equity in interscholastic athletics, including, but not limited to, the number of male and female pupils participating in interscholastic athletics in secondary schools, and action taken by the CIF in order to ensure compliance with Title IX of the federal Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. Sec. 1681 et seq.);
 - e) Health and safety of pupils, coaches, officials, and spectators;
 - f) The economic viability of interscholastic athletics in secondary schools, including, but not limited to, the promotion and marketing of interscholastic athletics;
 - g) New and continuing programs available to pupil athletes; and
 - h) Awareness and understanding of emerging issues related to interscholastic athletics in secondary schools.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

Need for the bill. According to the author, “Coaches are uniquely positioned to make a real difference in the lives of young people. They see our kids every day — under pressure, in moments of failure, and in moments of triumph. AB 1626 gives coaches the practical tools they need to recognize when a young athlete is struggling and to connect them with the help they deserve. This bill is about creating safer, more supportive environments for every student or child who steps onto a field or a court.”

What does this bill do? This bill establishes the content areas for high school interscholastic athletic coaches and youth sport organization coaches related to athlete mental health training focused on awareness of behavioral and mental health challenges, communication strategies and positive team culture, in coordination with AB 1665 (Pacheco).

High school coaches training. Currently, CIF offers training programs to high school coaches who receive a certificate upon course completion. The completed certificate is transferable between school districts. CIF's mandated coaches training program under the High School Coaches Training Program (HSCTP) currently includes instruction on CPR, First Aid, concussions, sudden cardiac arrest, and heat illness, among other topics. Currently, coaches must complete a CPR/First Aid/Concussion course and renew that training every two years. This applies to all CIF member schools, public and private.

CIF offers a free online concussion training course for coaches where they receive an immediate printed certification upon completion. The free CIF online training course in heat illness prevention includes sections that explore the principles of Heat Illness Awareness, Adequate Hydration, Gradual Acclimatization, Hydration Status Record Keeping, and offers Additional Prevention Measures.

Arguments in support. The Association of California School Administrators states, “Mental health training for coaches is an important step towards helping more students gain access to mental health support. Athletes deal with additional stress beyond the typical academic pressure and coaches often know these students best and can help intervene. Additional training for coaches will leave coaches better equipped to recognize the signs of behavioral and mental health difficulties experienced by athletes and help connect them to appropriate professional resources.”

Related legislation. AB 1665 (Pacheco) of the 2025-26 Session would require coaches in elementary schools, middle schools and interscholastic sports to complete a training in student mental health every two years.

AB 245 (McKinnor), Chapter 422, Statutes of 2023, requires the High School Coaching Education and Training Program to include training in recognizing the signs and symptoms of cardiac arrest.

AB 1653 (Sanchez), Chapter 589, Statutes of 2023, requires the California Interscholastic Foundation (CIF), in consultation with the California Department of Education (CDE), to develop guidelines, procedures and safety standards for monitoring the safety of practice and

play when wet bulb globe thermometer (WBGT) readings reach specified levels, no later than July 1, 2024; and requires the governing board of the school district or the governing body of the charter school to ensure that there is a written emergency action plan in place that describes the location and procedures to be followed in the event of heat illness related to the athletic program's activities or events.

AB 1327 (Weber), Chapter 366, Statutes of 2023, requires CIF to report to the Legislature annually; requires the CIF report to include instances of hate violence; and, requires CIF to develop, in consultation with community organizations that represent the interests of ethnic groups and communities of color, a standardized incident form to track hate violence that occurs at high school sporting games or sporting events, and annually post those results on their website.

AB 2800 (Chu), Chapter 21, Statutes of 2021, adds basic understanding of the signs and symptoms of, and appropriate responses to, heat illness, to the training component of the 1998 HSCTP.

AB 2009 (Maienschein), Chapter 646, Statutes of 2018, requires, commencing July 1, 2019 that any school district or charter school which offers any interscholastic athletic program, must ensure that there is an emergency action plan in place that describes the location and procedures to be followed in the event of sudden cardiac arrest or other medical emergencies related to the athletic program's activities or events, and acquire at least one AED for each school within the school district or the charter school, for the purpose of rendering emergency care or treatment, as specified. The bill would also expressly state that an employee is not liable for civil damages resulting from the rendering of emergency care or treatment pursuant to the bill's provisions, except as provided, nor a public school, school district, or charter school, except as provided.

AB 141 (Hayashi), Chapter 173, Statutes of 2012, adds requirements to the California High School Coaching Education and Training Program (HSCTP) for training on understanding the signs and symptoms of concussions and the appropriate response to concussions.

AB 1646 (Hayashi) of the 2009-10 Session would have required training for coaches to be able to identify symptoms of head and neck injury. The additional training would have been incorporated into coaches' first aid certification renewal. This bill was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 1893 (Hayashi) of the 2009-10 Session would have required all high school spirit activities (HSSA) coaches to have valid certification in CPR and first aid, including an understanding of signs, symptoms, and appropriate emergency action steps regarding potentially catastrophic injury, including but not limited to, head and neck injury and concussion. Pupils participating in HSSA who experience or show signs of trauma or other injury would have needed to obtain a release from the treating provider before resuming spirit activities. This bill was held in the Assembly Education Committee.

AB 533 (Hayashi) of the 2009-10 Session would have required training for coaches to be able to identify symptoms of head and neck injury. The training would have been incorporated into coaches' first aid certification renewal. This bill was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 2741 (Miller) Chapter 744, Statutes of 1998, establishes the 1998 California High School Coaching and Education Program to be administered by school districts and to emphasize, among other things, sport psychology, sport pedagogy, sport physiology, CPR, and first aid.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

A World Fit for Kids
Affirmative Athletics
Aids Healthcare Foundation / Impulse Group
American Academy of Pediatrics, California
Association of California School Administrators
Cal Voices
California Afterschool Network
California Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs INC.
California Alliance of Child and Family Services
California Association of Alcohol and Drug Program Executives, INC.
California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists
California Association of Mental Health Peer Run Organizations
California Association of Student Councils
California Behavioral Health Planning Council
California Hospital Association
California School Employees Association
California School-based Health Alliance
California Youth Empowerment Network
California Youth Football Alliance
Calpride
Center for Healing and Justice Through Sport
Children Now
County Behavioral Health Directors Association, (CBHDA)
Disability Rights California
Equality California
Forty Niners Football Company Llc, a Delaware Limited Liability Company
Game Plan Life Foundation
Gente Organizada
Helpline Youth Counseling, INC.
Hillsides
Home Field Advantage
Human Response Network
LA Waves
Laureus Sport for Good Foundation USA
Lgbtq Connection
Lgbtq+ Inclusivity, Visibility, and Empowerment (LIVE)
Los Angeles Unified School District
Mental Health America of California
Mopride
Movember Foundation
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI-CA)

National Center for Youth Law
National Health Law Program
North County Lgbtq Resource Center
On the Margins, INC
Pacific Clinics
Peer Voices United-sacramento
Positive Images
Racial and Ethnic Mental Health Disparities Coalition
Rainbow Families Action Bay Area
Reach LA
State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond
Stonewall Alliance of Chico
The Children's Partnership
Vietnamese American Arts & Letters Association
YMCA of Greater San Francisco
YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles
YMCA of San Diego County
YMCA of Silicon Valley
Youth Leadership Institute

Opposition

None on file

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