

Date of Hearing:

**ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, SPORTS, AND TOURISM**

Christopher M. Ward, Chair

AB 1665 (Pacheco) – As Introduced January 29, 2026

**SUBJECT:** Interscholastic athletics: California Interscholastic Federation: high school sports: coaches: student mental health training

**SUMMARY:** Requires the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) to prohibit individuals from coaching high school sports unless they have successfully completed a student mental health training course

Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires the California Department of Education (CDE) to consult with CIF to approve a student mental health training course.
- 2) Requires CIF to prohibit individuals from coaching high school sports unless the individual has successfully completed the training.
- 3) Requires coaches to complete the training required under this section each time the individual applies for or renews a certification permit provided by CIF to coach high school sports.
- 4) Allows individuals to complete the training at any time within the duration of the individual's new or renewed certification permit.
- 5) Requires the individual to present evidence of successful completion of the training to CIF.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Establishes the 1998 California High School Coaching Education and Training Program, administered by school districts, updated and rehearsed annually, and emphasizing the following components (Education Code (EDC) 35179.1):
  - a) Development of coaching philosophies consistent with school, school district, and governing board of a school district's 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 CPR, use of an automated external defibrillator (AED), and first aid, including, but not limited to, training in recognizing the signs and symptoms of, and responding to, concussions, heat illness, and, by July 1, 2024, cardiac arrest. Certification in CPR and use of an AED shall be consistent with national evidence-based emergency cardiovascular care guidelines. Concussion, heat illness, and cardiac arrest training may be provided by entities offering free, online, or other types of training courses. For purposes of this section, “heat illness” includes heat cramps, heat syncope, heat exhaustion, and exertional heat stroke.
  - 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.
  - h) Sound planning and goal setting.
- 2) Requires 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. The report is required to include, but not be limited to, the goals and objectives of CIF with regard to, and the status of, all of the following (Education Code (EDC) 33353):
- a) The governing structure of 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 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 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.
  - h) Awareness and understanding of emerging issues related to interscholastic athletics in secondary schools.
- 3) States the intent of the Legislature that CIF accomplish all of the following (EDC 33353):

- a) During years in which CIF is not required to report to the Legislature and the Governor pursuant to paragraph (1), it shall hold a public comment period relating to that report at three regularly scheduled federation council meetings per year.
- b) Annually allow public comment on the policies and practices of CIF at a regularly scheduled federation council meeting.
- c) Require sections of CIF to allow public comment on the policies and practices of the CIF and its sections, and the report required pursuant to paragraph (1), at each regularly scheduled section meeting.
- d) Engage in a comprehensive outreach effort to promote the public hearings described in subparagraphs (a) and (c).

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown. This measure is keyed fiscal by the Legislative Counsel.

**COMMENTS:**

- 1) Author's statement. According to the author, "Nearly 30 percent of teenagers face 'serious psychological distress' – a percentage that has risen in recent decades. With half of all serious mental health disorders emerging during teenage years, we must meet students where they are. For more than fifty percent of California's adolescents, that place is the playing field.

"While sports are meant to be a fun physical and mental outlet, student athletes face intense pressure to perform. At a time already defined by emotional and social turmoil, student-athlete physical and mental health must be supported in the most holistic way possible.

"As trusted individuals in students' lives, coaches have the unique opportunity to spot mental health crises and provide support to struggling student athletes. AB 1665 requires high school coaches to complete a mental health training approved by the California Department of Education. This bill equips coaches – who see and interact closely with student athletes every day – with necessary training to support student-athlete mental health, ensuring that the mentors closest to our students are prepared to provide knowledgeable and potentially life-saving aid."

- 2) Background. CIF was organized at a high school athletic convention on March 28, 1914, as a voluntary association of schools. Since 1914, the California Department of Education (CDE) has allowed the CIF to regulate interscholastic athletics, and the CIF has been the rule-making body for all of California's K-12 athletics programs since 1917. In 1981, that rule-making authority was expanded to include control over all interscholastic athletics, replacing the CDE in that role.

The Federation consists of ten regional sections, each of which is divided into several "leagues," for purposes of scheduling athletic contests, assigning referees, etc. Similar organizations exist in other states. Almost all public, private and parochial schools in California are CIF members.

The primary responsibilities of CIF are to administer high school athletic programs and to promulgate and enforce rules relating to a student's involvement in athletics - age, semesters in school, scholarship, residence, transfer status, and amateur standing. Such regulations, which are generated by the 1,609 member base of secondary schools, prevent undesirable exploitation of high school students, provide for the welfare of participants, and ensure that interscholastic athletics offer major benefits to students in a safe, rewarding environment.

- 2) 1998 California High School Coaching Education and Training Program. 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 Coaching Education and Training Program (HSCTP) currently includes instruction on CPR, First Aid, concussions and heat illness. CIF offers a free online concussion and heat illness training course for coaches where they receive an immediate printed certification upon completion. There is also a free online course for sudden cardiac arrest.

Currently, coaches must complete a CPR/First Aid/Concussion/Heat Illness course and renew that training every two years. Because this bill includes training on cardiac arrest as part of the mandatory training requirement, coaches will be required to receive updated cardiac arrest training every two years as well.

CIF Bylaw 22.B. (9) states: "Definition of a coach, paid or unpaid: Any individual that the school/district is required to approve under California Education Code 33190-33192, 45125.01 and 45125.1." Simply stated, the law applies to anyone who is required to be fingerprinted and/or is approved by their local school board/directors to have contact with students. This applies to all CIF member schools, public and private.

- 3) Arguments in support. According to California Hospital Association in support, "Every day, California hospitals see firsthand the growing number of young people in mental health crisis. Since adolescents spend much of their time with peers at school and in extracurricular activities such as sports, it is critical that adults in those environments be prepared to support young people who are struggling..."

"Today, 3 in 10 teenagers are facing "serious psychological distress," and a growing number of adolescents are being seen in hospital emergency departments due to suspected suicide attempts. And while sports provide an important and effective physical outlet for the more than half of adolescents who participate, many teens face pressure to perform at increasingly higher levels. Although high school coaches are required to complete training on concussions, cardiac arrest, and heat acclimatization, they are not currently required to receive training on students' mental health."

- 4) Arguments in opposition. According to the California Family Council in opposition, "Our concern with this bill is not its stated goal of supporting student mental health. The well-being of young people, including student-athletes, is vitally important, and coaches can play a meaningful role in recognizing when students may need support. However, AB 1665 creates a mandatory training requirement for high school coaches without providing clarity about what that training will include.

“The bill requires the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) to prohibit individuals from coaching unless they successfully complete a student mental health training course. Yet the Legislature has not defined what standards, curriculum, or ideological framework will guide that training. Requiring thousands of coaches across California to complete a training program whose contents have not been specified raises serious concerns about transparency, accountability, and fairness.”

- 5) Double-referral. Should the bill pass from this committee, it will be re-referred to the Assembly Committee on Education.
- 6) Amendments and policy considerations. The committee is proposing amendments that would move the requirement for student mental health training to the 1998 California High School Coaching Education and Training Program in existing law. Added to EDC 35179.1 (c):

(3) Student Mental Health: age-appropriate focus on wellness, including both physical and psychological, indicators, causes, strategies, and helpful resources, by July 1, 2027. Student Mental Health training may be provided by entities offering free, online, or other types of training courses.’

The proposed amendments will also add the following sections, with the second and third sections expanding the student mental health training requirement to lower grade level schools that offer athletic activities:

EDC 49032.1:

(a) Commencing with the 2027-28 school year, all persons who serve as coaches in interscholastic athletic programs at high schools, including private high schools, that are members of the California Interscholastic Federation shall be required to annually complete, before the start of the season for the high school sport in which they are authorized to coach, a mental health coaching education program training program that is approved by the department and meets the guidelines set forth in paragraph (3) of subdivision (c) of Section 35179.1.

EDC 35180:

(a) A school district, county office of education or a charter school that sponsors an athletic program, other than interscholastic athletics, shall ensure that athletic coaches receive training in the following areas every two years:

- (1) Sudden Cardiac Arrest as specified in Section 33479.6
- (2) Student Mental Health as specified in Section 33480

EDC 33480:

(a) Commencing with the 2027-28 school year, all persons who serve as coaches in an athletic program sponsored by a school, other than an interscholastic athletic program, shall be required to complete a student mental health coaching education and training program that is approved by the department.

(b) “School” means a public school, including a charter school, or private school that elects to offer athletic activities.

- 7) Prior and related legislation:

- a) AB 1572 (Alanis) of 2026 would Requires the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) to annually verify the eligibility of its officials to officiate CIF contests by requiring those officials to annually register through a platform. The bill is currently in the Assembly Committee on Arts, Entertainment, Sports, and Tourism.
- b) AB 1626 (Gabriel), of 2026, would enact legislation relating to mental health training for youth sports coaches. This bill is currently pending referral
- c) AB 1985 (Irwin), of 2026, would be known as Sarah Shulze’s Law, and would require the Surgeon General to identify and compile a list of age-appropriate mental health training programs that local educational agencies and postsecondary educational institutions can use to train athletic coaches that meet minimum standards. This bill is currently in the Assembly Committee on Health.
- d) AB 245 (McKinnor), Chapter 422, Statutes of 2023, requires coaches to complete training in CPR, recognizing the signs and symptoms of sudden cardiac arrest, and how to use and automated external defibrillator (AED). It also requires emergency action plans and rehearsal of procedures to be followed in the event of a medical emergency related to athletic program activities.
- e) AB 1327 (Weber), Chapter 172, Statutes of 2023, requires CDE to develop a standardized incident form to track racial discrimination, harassment, or hazing that occurs at high school sporting games or sporting events.

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:****Support**

California Hospital Association

**Opposition**

California Family Council

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