

Date of Hearing: March 10, 2026

Consultant: Jaleel Baker

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Nick Schultz, Chair

AB 1549 (Krell) – As Introduced January 7, 2026

SUMMARY: Extends the sunset date of the pilot program authorizing specified counties to offer an alternative batterer’s intervention program (BIP) to individuals convicted of domestic violence. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Extends the sunset date on the authorization for the Counties of Napa, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, and Yolo to offer alternative BIPs for domestic violence offenders from July 1, 2026, to July 1, 2030.
- 2) Adds Sacramento County as one of the authorized counties that can participate in the pilot program.
- 3) Contains an urgency clause.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) A person who willfully inflicts corporal injury resulting in a traumatic condition upon a victim is guilty of a felony punishable by imprisonment in the state prison for two, three, or four years, or in a county jail for no longer than one year, or a fine up to six thousand dollars (\$6,000), or by both fine and imprisonment. (Pen. Code, § 273.5, subd. (a).)
- 2) Requires a defendant who received probation for a domestic violence offense to successfully complete a batterer’s intervention program lasting for a period not less than one year with periodic progress reports by the program to the court every three months or less and weekly sessions of a minimum of two hours class time. (Pen. Code, § 1203.097, subd. (a)(6).)
- 3) Requires a defendant to attend consecutive weekly sessions, unless granted an excused absence for good cause by the program for no more than three individual sessions during the entire program, and to complete the program within 18 months. (Pen. Code, § 1203.097, subd. (a)(6).)
- 4) Approved programs must be designed to stop domestic violence and include, among other things, structured group sessions focused on offender accountability, education regarding the dynamics and impacts of abuse, victim notification procedures, and regular reporting to the court and probation department, among other required components. (Pen. Code, § 1203.097, subd. (c).)
- 5) Requires a defendant convicted of an offense against any of the following persons to complete a batterer’s intervention program: A spouse or former spouse, a cohabitant or former cohabitant, a person the offender was in a dating or engagement relationship with, the

mother or father of the offender's child, the child, or any person related to the offender by blood or marriage in the first or second degree. (Fam. Code, § 6211.)

- 6) Authorizes the Counties of Napa, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and Yolo to offer a program for individuals convicted of domestic violence that does not comply with the components of the batterer's program otherwise outlined in state law, if the program meets certain requirements. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (a).)
- 7) Requires the counties to develop the program in consultation with the domestic violence service providers and other relevant community partners. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (a)(1).)
- 8) Requires the counties to perform a risk and needs assessment utilizing an assessment demonstrated to be appropriate for domestic violence offenders for each offender entering the program. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (a)(2).)
- 9) Requires that the offender's treatment within the program be based on the findings of the risk and needs assessment. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (a)(3).)
- 10) Requires the program to include components that are evidence-based or promising practices. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (a)(4).)
- 11) Requires the program to have a comprehensive written curriculum that informs the operations of the program and outlines the treatment and interventions modalities. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (a)(5).)
- 12) Requires the offender's treatment within the program to be for not less than one year in length, unless an alternative length is established by a validated risk and needs assessment completed by the probation department or an organization approved by the probation department. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (a)(6).)
- 13) Requires the counties to collect data on participants in the program, as specified. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (a)(7).)
- 14) Requires the counties to report all of the following information annually to the Legislature:
 - a) The risk and needs assessment tool used for the program;
 - b) The curriculum used by each program;
 - c) The number of participants with a program length other than one year, and the alternative program lengths used;
 - d) Individual data on the number of offenders participating in the program; and,
 - e) Other individual data that the county is required by law to collect, as specified. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (a)(8)(A)-(E).)

- 15) Defines “evidence-based program or practice” as a program or practice that has a high level of research indicating its effectiveness, determined as a result of multiple rigorous evaluations including randomized controlled trials and evaluations that incorporate strong comparison group designs, or a single large multisite randomized study, and, typically, has specified procedures that allow for successful replication. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (c)(1).)
- 16) Defines “promising program or practice” as a program or practice that has some research demonstrating its effectiveness but does not meet the full criteria for an evidence-based designation. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (c)(2).)
- 17) Provides that the law authorizing the named counties to operate alternative batterer’s programs sunsets on July 1, 2026. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (f).)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Author's Statement:** According to the author, “AB 1549 is a step toward breaking the cycles of abuse that all too often entrap victims for months or years. More than two decades ago, the state made completion of a Batterers Intervention Program (BIP) mandatory for all domestic violence offenders sentenced to probation – an important step to help prevent repeated abuse. Since then, multiple reports have documented serious shortcomings in the state’s BIPs, including high absentee and dropout rates among offenders. This is driven in no small part by an outdated curriculum that fails to take advantage of modern best practices. A May 2025 grand jury report highlighted specific, urgent shortcomings in Sacramento County’s BIP. AB 1549 will allow selected counties to continue to study promising improvements to BIPs by extending the sunset date of an existing pilot program until July 2030. At the same time, it proposes a measured expansion of the pilot into Sacramento County, where stakeholders have asked for flexibility to make much-needed changes to the way BIPs operate here.”
- 2) **Existing Batterer’s Intervention Programs:** Criminal law makes it a crime to willfully inflict a physical injury that results in a traumatic condition on an intimate partner, including a spouse, former spouse, a current or previous cohabitant, a person the offender was in a dating or engagement relationship with, among other qualified victims. (Pen. Code, § 273.5, subd. (a)-(b).)

When a person is convicted of a domestic violence offense and granted probation, state law requires the court to impose specific mandatory conditions. One of those conditions is participation in a BIP. (Pen. Code, § 1203.097, subd. (a).) A BIP is a court-ordered counseling and educational program for individuals convicted of domestic violence offenses. State law sets minimum requirements for BIPs. (Pen. Code, § 1203.097, subd. (c).) Offenders who receive probation must complete at least one year in a BIP and participate in weekly group sessions. (Pen. Code, § 1203.097, subd. (a)(6).) BIPs must include content designed to promote accountability for abusive behavior, educate participants about the impact of domestic violence on victims and children, and encourage the development of nonviolent relationship skills. (Pen. Code, § 1203.097, subd. (c)(1)(F).) BIPs are required to provide regular progress reports to the court and probation department on the participant’s progress in

the program. (Pen. Code, § 1203.097, subd. (c)(1)(O).) County probation departments are responsible for approving and monitoring these programs to ensure compliance with statutory standards. (Pen. Code, § 1203.097, subd. (c)(5).)

Accordingly, California’s current framework treats BIPs as a mandatory rehabilitative component of probation in domestic violence cases. Existing law allows selected counties to provide alternative BIPs in place of the existing BIPs counties are required to offer. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (a).) Alternative BIPs allow the county more flexibility to update program design elements, including curriculum and program length, while not constrained by the standards in existing law. (*Id.*) If an individual is convicted of domestic violence, receives probation, and is located within a participating county, that individual can be enrolled in an alternative BIP, likely with an updated program design, and upon completion will be deemed to have met the existing batterer’s program requirements. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (b).)

- 3) **Alternative Batterer’s Intervention Program Efficacy:** In October 2022, the California State Auditor issued an audit of the state’s existing BIPs. The Auditor examined the administration and oversight by the probation departments and courts in five counties—Alameda, Contra Costa, Del Norte, Los Angeles, and San Joaquin. The Auditor found that persons convicted of domestic violence were “far less likely to reoffend” if they completed a batterer’s intervention program.¹ However, nearly 50 percent of program participants reviewed by the Auditor did not complete the program, and most of those participants later reoffended. (*Ibid.*) The State Auditor found “probation departments did not consistently assess all offenders for underlying issues, such as mental health or substance abuse concerns, that might interfere with an offender’s ability to complete a program.” (*Ibid.* at p. 2.) The auditor also reported that “probation departments, program providers, and courts generally did not hold many of the offenders we reviewed accountable for probation and program violations.” (*Ibid.*)

Moreover, “even when notified about offenders’ violations, the courts, in some instances, referred the offenders back to a program without imposing additional consequences,” which according to the Auditor “likely weakens the impact of programs.” (*Ibid.*) Specifically, the Auditor noted that “none of the five probation departments had established sufficient standards, policies, and procedures for overseeing program providers and ensuring program compliance.” (*Ibid.*) As a result, “program providers did not supervise offenders appropriately or report required information.” (*Ibid.*)

AB 372 (Stone), Chapter 290, Statutes of 2018, authorized the Counties of Napa, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and Yolo to offer an alternative batterer’s intervention program for individuals convicted of domestic violence that does not need to comply with existing requirements for batterer’s programs. These alternative BIPs have been used by counties to update program design elements including curriculum, program length, risk assessment factors, oversight, and other important program design considerations.

Each year, the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) is required to submit an annual report to the Legislature assessing the effectiveness of the pilot program, and reporting on specified data. Based on the most recent Legislative Report, “Five years into the

¹ <https://information.auditor.ca.gov/pdfs/reports/2021-113.pdf>

AB 372 Pilot and across six counties, more than 6,900 people have entered the program. For those who entered the program in the fourth year, half (50%) had shown a positive completion of the program. One in six had a negative completion (16%) and over one third (34%) had a neutral, pending, or unknown completion status,”² which can be seen as an early indication of improved outcomes when compared to the effectiveness of existing batterer’s programs. However, it is still unclear whether program completion rates are generally stronger for the alternative BIPs when compared to the existing BIPs in other counties. The report also highlights other important data limitations, such as, “The evidence about specific domestic violence programming varies, with most research reporting no effect on recidivism ... Due to data limitations surrounding recidivism measurement time, recidivism rates for individual counties are not presented in this report.” (*Ibid.* at pp. 15-16.)

Although there may be some early signs of success with alternative programs, it remains unclear whether the alternative BIPs produce better outcomes, specifically whether individuals that participate in the alternative programs are more likely to complete the program, or less likely to reoffend. Additionally, the Legislature is still waiting on the Year 6 – Legislative Report and may require more recent data on the alternative BIPs to fully assess their efficacy.

- 4) **Sacramento Grand Jury Report on Batterer Intervention Program:** Sacramento County is proposed for inclusion in this pilot program authorizing alternative BIPs in select counties. A recent Sacramento Grand Jury report identified concerns with the existing BIPs in the county, regarding completion rates, data collection, provider oversight, and the absence of validated risk assessment tools. ³ The grand jury report states, “The program in Sacramento County has had virtually no change in treatment intervention (method, curriculum, and philosophy/approach) since its inception, and there is no standardized assessment tool to determine the offender’s risk for reoffending at the completion of the program.” (*Ibid.*) This report also specifically highlights that Sacramento County is not one of the counties authorized for the alternative batterers pilot program. This report has been used to support Sacramento as an ideal county to extend the pilot program to, given its current programmatic structure, and prevalence of domestic violence in the county.
- 5) **Argument in Support:** According to *the California State Association of Counties*, one of the bill’s co-sponsors, “Existing law established in the early 1990s requires that individuals placed on probation for domestic violence battery must complete a 52-week batterer intervention program, which current statute offers minimal opportunities to explore other programming options that could more effectively meet the individualized, criminogenic needs of those who have committed domestic violence. To help address this considerable public health and safety concern, in 2017, CSAC, along with CPOC and other county affiliates, set out to further assess domestic violence programming by co-sponsoring AB 372. This bill was aimed at advancing batterer intervention programming, authorizing six counties (Napa, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and Yolo) to pilot innovative, alternative, evidence-based, approaches with the long-term goal of improving outcomes.

² <https://www.counties.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/AB372-Year-5-Legislative-Report.pdf>

³ [gj-batterers-treatment-program.pdf](https://www.counties.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/AB372-Year-5-Legislative-Report.pdf)

“To date, the work under AB 372 has led to local batterer intervention program modifications, curriculum advancements, briefs on California’s domestic violence system, recidivism research, and annual reporting. After the first five years of implementation, over 6,900 individuals have entered programs across the six counties. While progress has been made in this area, there remains work to be done to expand evidence-based practices that will change thinking patterns, reduce anti-social behavior, and better understand the complex relationship between the risk of reoffending and treatment needs.

“Simply put, AB 1549 would allow seven counties, program participants, survivors of intimate partner violence, service providers, and experts in this field to continue to engage in the work to develop more effective alternative treatment programs that reduce domestic violence.”

6) Related Legislation:

- a) AB 292 (Patterson), would add the crime of felony domestic violence to the list of “Violent Felonies” that subject a defendant to additional penalties, including under California “Three Strikes” Law, and reduce the custody credits that a defendant may receive. AB 292 is pending referral in the Senate.
- b) AB 1877 (Stefani), would increase the penalty for a violation of a domestic violence protective order or stay-away order for specified crimes where the underlying charged crime is a felony. AB 1877 is pending a hearing in this committee.
- c) AB 2119 (Jackson), would require a district attorney to establish a process for reviewing and investigating reported cases of sexual assault or domestic violence and would require that process to include a report to the victim explaining the decision whether to bring criminal accusations and which accusations to allege. AB 2119 is pending referral.
- d) AB 2261 (Dixon), would allow the court to consider issuing an order restraining a domestic violence defendant from contacting any person who is a member of the victim’s family or household if there is competent evidence that the individual is a victim of an offense committed by the defendant. AB 2261 is pending referral.
- e) AB 2701 (J. Gonzalez), would create a domestic violence offender registry and require the DOJ to create a public database of people convicted of a qualifiable domestic violence offense. Offenders would register for up to 20 years and provide specified information to their local law enforcement agency. AB 2701 is pending a hearing in this committee.

7) Prior Legislation:

- a) AB 479 (Blanca-Rubio), Chapter 86, Statutes of 2023, extended the sunset date of the pilot program authorizing specified counties to offer alternative batterer’s intervention programs from July 1, 2023, until July 1, 2026.
- b) AB 304 (Holden), of the 2023-2024 Legislative Session, would have transferred responsibility for oversight of batterer’s intervention programs from probation

departments to the Department of Justice. The bill was vetoed by the Governor.

- c) SB 827 (Committee on Public Safety), Chapter 434, Statutes of 2021, extended the sunset date of the pilot program authorizing specified counties to offer alternative batterer's intervention programs from July 1, 2022, until July 1, 2023.
- d) AB 372 (Stone), Chapter 290, Statutes of 2018, authorized the Counties of Napa, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and Yolo to offer a program for individuals convicted of domestic violence that does not comply with the requirement of the batterer's program, as specified, if the program meets certain requirements.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Chief Probation Officers' of California (CPOC) (Co-Sponsor)
 Arcadia Police Officers' Association
 Brea Police Association
 Burbank Police Officers' Association
 California Association of School Police Chiefs
 California Coalition of School Safety Professionals
 California Crime Victims Assistance Association
 California District Attorneys Association
 California Narcotic Officers' Association
 California Reserve Peace Officers Association
 California State Association of Counties (CSAC)
 Claremont Police Officers Association
 Corona Police Officers Association
 Culver City Police Officers' Association
 Fullerton Police Officers' Association
 Little Hoover Commission
 Los Angeles School Police Management Association
 Los Angeles School Police Officers Association
 Murrieta Police Officers' Association
 Newport Beach Police Association
 Palos Verdes Police Officers Association
 Placer County Deputy Sheriffs' Association
 Pomona Police Officers' Association
 Riverside Police Officers Association
 Riverside Sheriffs' Association
 Sacramento County District Attorney's Office
 Sacramento; County of
 Smart Justice California, a Project of Beyond Impact
 Weave

Opposition

None submitted

Analysis Prepared by: Jaleel Baker / PUB. S. / (916) 319-3744