

Date of Hearing: April 29, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 1956 (Valencia) – As Introduced February 13, 2026

Policy Committee: Health

Vote: 16 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill authorizes the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Office of Suicide Prevention (OSP) to focus its activities on boys and young men, in addition to its currently mandated focus areas, and requires OSP to provide to the Legislature a report on strategies to implement the activities focused on boys and young men.

FISCAL EFFECT:

CDPH anticipates minor and absorbable General Fund costs to implement the provisions of this bill. CDPH states preparation of the required Legislative report can be accommodated within existing staff capacity and resources.

COMMENTS:

1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

California is facing a mental health crisis, and young men and boys are at the center of it. Four out of five youth suicides are male... accounting for nearly 80% of suicides statewide. These statistics represent more than data points, they represent sons, brothers, and fathers whose lives were lost. Despite this clear disparity, targeted outreach and intervention for young men remains limited, even though they face distinct barriers to seeking help, including stigma, isolation, and a lack of messaging that resonates with their experiences. [This bill] recognizes this gap and directs greater focus toward prevention strategies that better reach and support this population.

2) **Background. OSP.** Assembly Bill 2112 (Ramos), Chapter 142, Statutes of 2020, established OSP to address the root causes of suicide and self-harm. According to the OSP website, OSP builds partnerships, shares critical data, and promotes evidence-informed strategies that support safe and healthy communities. OSP has four strategic priority areas: communications; creating safe and protective environments; crisis response and postvention; and continuing education and training. According to the OSP Annual Highlights Brief, Year 4, OSP's strategic priorities aligned with the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Suicide Prevention Resource for Action, and best practices in population-based suicide prevention. The brief also notes that in Spring 2025, OSP conducted the second biennial Needs Assessment to obtain input from partners on

specific technical assistance needs, focus areas within OSP's strategic priorities, and to identify how OSP can best support suicide prevention and response work at the state and local level.

Other State Efforts to Improve Mental Health Among Youth.

- **Executive Order N-31-25.** On July 30, 2025, Governor Newsom announced Executive Order (EO) N-31-25, which “directs a coordinated statewide response to improve mental health outcomes, reduce stigma, and expand access to meaningful education, work, and mentorship opportunities.” The EO requires the California Health and Human Services Agency, in consultation with its component departments (including CDPH) and other departments, develop recommendations to (a) address the suicide crisis among young men within existing initiatives, including the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI) and other components of the Master Plan for Kids’ Mental Health, and (b) support the mental health and help-seeking behavior of boys, men and the communities that support them, including development of pathways for men and boys to participate in improved behavioral health services.
- **Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI).** CYBHI is a five-year, \$4+ billion initiative administered by the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) to create a more integrated, youth-centered system that meets the mental health needs of young Californians. As part of CYBHI, DHCS launched two mobile applications to support youth: the BrightLife Kids application for parents or caregivers and kids 0-12 years old, and the Soluna application for 13- to 25-year-olds. Both provide free, expert sessions with professionals, including one-to-one sessions; forums; and more, and are available regardless of insurance or immigration status.

The Youth Suicide Reporting and Crisis Response Pilot Program, also part of CYBHI, was designed to develop and test models for rapidly reporting and comprehensively responding to youth suicides and suicide attempts at the county level by providing equitable, timely, and culturally responsive crisis services and follow-up supports within school and community settings. The pilot program was unique to each of ten participating counties; however, the overarching approach aimed to complement and expand upon existing supports and strengthen systems; identify and shrink gaps in rapidly reporting suicide deaths and attempts; and improve collaboration across departments and within schools and community-based organizations.

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