CONSENT

Bill No: AB 1956
Author: Valencia (D), et al.
Amended: 5/11/26 in Assembly
Vote: 21

SENATE HEALTH COMMITTEE: 10-0, 6/10/26
AYES: Weber Pierson, Valladares, Caballero, Durazo, Grove, Menjivar, Padilla, Pérez, Rubio, Smallwood-Cuevas
NO VOTE RECORDED: Gonzalez

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE: 13-0, 6/30/26
AYES: Umberg, Niello, Allen, Ashby, Caballero, Durazo, Laird, Reyes, Stern, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 72-0, 5/18/26 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Suicide prevention

SOURCE: Generation Up

DIGEST: This bill adds boys and young men to the list of highest risk populations on which the Office of Suicide Prevention (OSP) can focus its prevention activities. Requires OSP, by July 1, 2028, to provide a report to the Legislature on strategies to implement these activities.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

1) Establishes the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to be vested with all the duties, powers, purposes, functions, responsibilities, and jurisdiction as they relate to public health, as specified. [Health and Safety Code (HSC) §131050]

2) Permits CDPH to establish OSP with responsibilities to include providing information and technical assistance to statewide and regional partners regarding best practices on suicide prevention policies and programs; conducting state-level assessment of regional and statewide suicide prevention policies and practices; monitoring and disseminating data to inform prevention efforts at the state and local levels; convening experts and stakeholders, including stakeholders representing populations with high rates of suicide, to encourage collaboration and coordination of resources for suicide prevention; and, reporting on progress to reduce rates of suicide. [Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) §131300(a)]

3) Permits OSP to focus activities on groups with the highest risk, including youth, Native American youth, older adults, veterans, and LGBTQ people. [WIC §131300(b)]

This bill:

1) Adds boys, as a population to receive special attention under the category of "youth," and young men as an additional category to the list of highest risk populations on which OSP can focus its suicide prevention activities.

2) Requires OSP, by July 1, 2028, to provide a report to the Legislature on strategies to implement the activities focused on boys and young men. Sunsets this reporting requirement on July 1, 2032.

Background

According to the author of this bill:

> 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 interventions for young men remain 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. California has the opportunity to do better and strengthen its response to a crisis that continues to affect families and communities all across the state.

In 2024, suicide was the 10th leading cause of death in the U.S., accounting for 48,824 deaths nationwide (13.7 per 100,000 people) and 2.2 million estimated attempts (1.5 times increase from 2023), according to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's website. Suicide-related deaths were four times higher among males (38,977) compared to females (9,847). Among youth and young adults ages 15 to 34, suicide is the second leading cause of death. However, suicide rates in this age group decreased slightly from 2023 to 2024, declining from 15.9 to 15.2 per 100,000 (4%). Firearms were the most common method of death by suicide, accounting for more than half of all suicide deaths (57%).

In California, according to CDPH's "2026 California State of Public Health Report," there were 4,042 suicides in 2024. Overall suicide rates in California increased somewhat from 2000 through 2019 with a slight drop observed during the first year of the pandemic (2020), followed by fairly stable rates since then. The number of suicide deaths in 2024 represents a decrease from the number of suicide deaths (4,191) in 2023. The most common mechanism for Californians aged 25 and younger was suffocation, comprising 38.9% of these suicide deaths. There were 30,535 non-fatal self-harm-related emergency department visits in 2024, with the majority (54.4%) among individuals 24 or younger.

CDPH highlights Governor Newsom's Executive Order (EO), regarding suicide rates for boys and young men, and states it is participating in the coordinated statewide response to improve mental health, reduce stigma, and expand access to meaningful education, work, and mentorship opportunities for this population. OSP also led two Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative workstreams, including the Youth Suicide Reporting and Crisis Response Pilot Program, which aimed to strengthen local systems for rapid report and response to youth suicides and suicide attempts in 10 counties, and the Never a Bother youth suicide prevention campaign. The Never a Bother campaign, co-created with over 420 youth from across California, is part of the state's ongoing effort to increase awareness of suicide warning signs, share suicide prevention and mental health resources, build life-saving intervention skills, and promote help seeking behavior for youth and young adults—before, during, and after a crisis. In its first year, the campaign generated more than 1.12 billion impressions, while community-based grantees offered over 4,600 engagement activities that supported 106,000+ direct interactions with youth and caregivers.

Governor's EO. In July 2025, Governor Newsom signed Executive Order N-31-25 directing California state agencies to launch a coordinated response to the rising

suicide rates among young men and boys, which he called an urgent and growing crisis. The EO proclaimed in part that young men are more disconnected from school, work, and relationships than ever before, with nearly one-in-four men under 30 years old reporting that they have no close friends (a five-fold increase since 1990) with higher rates of disconnection for young Black males, citing that a lack of social connection is associated with increased risk of poor health, including mental health disorders, poverty, and even premature death. The EO further stated that college enrollment and completion rates for men have dropped significantly over the past decade, and the school suspension rate for boys is more than double the rate for girls, with even higher rates for Black and American Indian and Native Alaskan boys. The EO ordered the creation and continuation of various initiatives under Governor Newsom's Administration, such as:

a) Directing the California Health and Human Services Agency, in consultation with the Department of Health Care Services, CDPH, and other relevant departments, to develop recommendations to address the suicide crisis among young men within existing initiatives, including the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative and other components of the Master Plan for Kids' Mental Health; to support the mental health and help-seeking behavior of boys, men, and the communities that support them, including those affected by violence; and, to access timely services and seek treatment if needed, including development of pathways for men and boys in need to participate in improved behavioral health services that are expanding through California's Mental Health for All Plan and the Master Plan for Kid's Mental Health;
b) Requiring the Governor's Office of Service and Community Engagement, in consultation with the Office of the First Partner and the Executive Director of the State Board of Education, to identify opportunities for promoting and enhancing the participation of men and boys in service opportunities through California Volunteers;
c) Requiring the Executive Director of the State Board of Education, and requesting the California Department of Education and California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, to identify opportunities within the initiatives underway as part of the more than $1 billion invested to strengthen the teacher workforce to improve recruitment of men as teachers and school counselors, including review of outreach, marketing, and promotional materials and partnerships with institutions of higher education; and,
d) Requiring other agencies and departments within the Governor's Administration to assist in the efforts directed by the EO if requested, and requesting agencies and departments not subject to the Governor's authority to do the same.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

Senate Rule 28.8

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/3/26)

Generation Up (source)
American Institute for Boys and Men
California Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
California Alliance of Caregivers
California Behavioral Health Association
California Charter Schools Association
California Medical Association
Health Officers Association of California
Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance, Inc.
Orange County Association for Mental Health
Orange County Medical Association
Orange County United Way
Rebecca Bender Initiative
United Nations Association of Orange County
Wilton Rancheria

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/3/26)

None received

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: Generation Up, sponsor of this bill, and other supporters, state that the challenges boys and young men face, such as stigma around mental health conditions, isolation and masculinity norms are often exacerbated for young men in communities of color, where access to mental health resources may already be limited or looked down upon. Despite these disparities, young men and boys are not explicitly recognized as a priority population within existing suicide prevention frameworks. Without targeted outreach, many at-risk individuals may remain disconnected from the support systems that could prevent mental health crises and suicide attempts.

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 72-0, 5/18/26
AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell,

Lackey, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Ramos, Ransom, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Calderon, Dixon, Lee, Papan, Quirk-Silva, Celeste Rodriguez, Stefani, Wicks

Prepared by: Reyes Diaz / HEALTH / (916) 651-4111
8/5/26 15:04:13

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