

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

AB 1985 (Irwin and Pacheco)

As Amended August 13, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Requires, on or before July 1, 2028, and every two years thereafter, each campus of the California State University (CSU), each community college of a community college district (CCD), and each private postsecondary educational institution and independent institution of higher education that receives state financial assistance, and requests each campus of the University of California (UC), require a person who serves as a coach, *including an assistant coach, or trainer* in an athletic program to complete a student mental health training. *Requires the training, at minimum, to cover suicide prevention education and authorizes the training to be provided by an entity that offers free, online, or other types of training courses.* States that the provisions of this bill may be cited as Sarah Shulze's Law.

Senate Amendments

- 1) Strike the requirement that an institution identify and compile a list of mental health training programs that can be used to train athletic coaches.
- 2) Permit the required training to be provided by an entity that offers free, online, or other types of training courses.
- 3) Add coauthors.

COMMENTS

Mental health on college campuses. According to the 2024-25 Healthy Minds Survey, a nationwide survey on mental health and related issues in college student populations from the Healthy Minds Network, college students continue to report poor mental health, with more than one in three students saying they experience moderate anxiety or depression. Data from the most recent survey found that only 36% of college students are thriving, reporting high levels of success in relationships, self-esteem, purpose and optimism, down slightly from 38% the previous year. There is slight improvement since the COVID-19 pandemic, with fewer students reporting anxiety, self-harm and suicidal ideation than in 2021–22. Student usage of mental health resources also continues to climb; 37% of all respondents said they had accessed therapy or counseling in the past 12 months, compared to 30% in 2018–19.

According to "Suicide in National Collegiate Athletic Association athletes: a 20-year analysis," published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* (but focusing on athletes in the United States from 2002-2022), the rate of suicide in National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) collegiate athletes has increased over the last 20 years and over the last decade has become the second most common cause of death, after accidents. The study concludes that additional mental health resources including efforts to raise awareness, screening for early risk identification, training coaches and support staff on how to identify athletes at risk, and providing access to mental health providers trained in sport psychology are examples of ways to help prevent suicide in this population.

NCAA pilot program. In August 2025 the NCAA announced a partnership with the National Council for Mental Wellbeing to offer fully funded Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) for Higher Education training to Division III institutions to focus on head coaches and athletic trainers. Division III schools are eligible to receive one fully funded training during the program, which will be in effect until August 1, 2027. According to the NCAA, the 2022 NCAA Coach Well-Being Study underscored the need for expanded mental health support in college athletics. NCAA says that more than 80% of coaches reported spending increased time addressing mental health concerns with their student-athletes compared with pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels, and many identified mental health as the top issue facing their teams. As of late July 2025, 66 Division III institutions had completed the MHFA training. Through this program, up to 30 individuals at each active Division III school are eligible to participate in a 7.5-hour, in-person training with expert MHFA instructors on their campus. Upon completion, participants will be certified in MHFA for Higher Education for three years.

According to the Author

According to the author, there is currently no standard in state law that requires athletic coaches at college and universities to be trained on mental health awareness and best practices for their student-athletes. Without a state standard, individual institutions and campuses are left to create their own standards if they voluntarily train coaches on mental health. The author argues that this leaves room for potentially no standard at all, inconsistent implementation if there is a policy, and generally a lack of oversight from the state to ensure coaches are receiving training on the most up-to-date and evidence-based best practices.

Arguments in Support

The California Hospital Association (CHA) states in support of this bill that hospitals see firsthand the growing number of young people in mental health crisis. Being able to spot the signs that a person is struggling and help them find support before their condition worsens is an important step toward improving this crisis. Athletic coaches have a unique perspective and ability to support their athletes' physical and mental health needs. CHA says that research shows that students who are struggling are often most comfortable reaching out to people with whom they already have relationships; as such, it is important to equip athletic coaches with tools to support their student-athletes' mental health.

The University of California (UC) supports this bill stating that the mental health of student-athletes is a recognized and ongoing priority across UC campuses, and we have invested in the programs, protocols, and training infrastructure necessary to support student-athlete well-being. UC states its campus athletics programs already require coaches and athletic staff to complete mental health training as part of their professional development obligations. Several campuses utilize nationally recognized training frameworks, including modules developed by the U.S. Council for Athletes' Health, that are consistent with both the intent of this legislation and NCAA Mental Health Best Practices guidelines. UC concludes they are committed to ensuring our campuses continue to meet or exceed the standards this legislation envisions, and look forward to supporting implementation of Sarah Shulze's Law.

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, the Chancellor's Office estimates minor, ongoing Proposition 98 General Funds costs for community colleges to identify and provide the required training, with the understanding they would opt to offer an existing or free training that is available, or an existing training that may already be offered to mental health employees that satisfies the requirement. However, to the extent a community college decides to develop its own training, the Proposition 98 General Fund costs could range from the tens of thousands to the hundreds of thousands of dollars. This bill's costs for CSU and UC are expected to be minor and absorbable within existing resources.

VOTES:**ASM HEALTH: 16-0-0**

YES: Bonta, Chen, Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Caloza, Carrillo, Mark González, Johnson, Patel, Patterson, Rogers, Sanchez, Schiavo, Sharp-Collins, Stefani

ASM HIGHER EDUCATION: 10-0-0

YES: Fong, DeMaio, Boerner, Macedo, Jackson, Muratsuchi, Patel, Ramos, Sharp-Collins, Tangipa

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Aguiar-Curry, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 71-0-9

YES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ransom, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Schiavo, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

ABS, ABST OR NV: Arambula, Chen, Garcia, Hoover, Lackey, Ramos, Celeste Rodriguez, Sanchez, Schultz

UPDATED

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