State drills down on the youth mental health impacts of social media platforms.

With the U.S. Surgeon General calling for a warning label to be placed on social media platforms due to their contribution to the youth mental health crisis, Governor Newsom has signed four bills aimed at regulating youth interaction with social media.

The first bill, AB 1282 by Assembly Member Josh Lowenthal (D-Long Beach), will have the state evaluating and reporting out on the impacts of social media use on the state's children and youth. Specifically, the bill requires the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to report to the Legislature, on or before December 31, 2026, a "statewide strategy to understand, communicate, and mitigate mental health risks associated with the use of social media by children and youth." The strategy must include, among other things, the degree to which youth mental health is positively, negatively, or neutrally impacted by the use of social media and recommendations to strengthen children and youth resiliency strategies and California's use of mental health services related to social media. In developing the strategy, the bill requires CDPH to prioritize the perspective of children and youth through a "robust engagement process" that focuses on transition-age youth, at-risk populations, in-need populations, and underserved cultural and linguistic populations. CDPH must also consult with the California mental health community, within which the bill includes educators.

The Governor also signed SB 976 by Senator Nancy Skinner (D-Berkeley), the Protecting Our Kids from Social Media Addiction Act. While the bill is largely about regulating social media platforms it does include some provisions specific to when students are on campus. Under SB 976, operators of an "addictive internet-based service or application" are prohibited from providing an "addictive feed" to a user unless the operator does not know the user is a minor, the operator has obtained parental consent, or, beginning January 1, 2027, the operator has reasonably determined the user is not a minor.

The bill also requires operators to provide a way for the parent of a minor to place limits on what their child sees, including limiting notifications and limiting use of an application to a set amount of time per day. By default, the bill also requires minor accounts to be set to private and to limit the ability of a minor user to view the number of likes or other forms of feedback on posts. Specific to use of social media at school, SB 976 effectively prohibits an operator from sending notifications to a user it knows is a minor during school hours, defined as between 8 am and 3 pm, Monday through Friday, from September to May. Additionally, beginning January 1, 2027, this prohibition will extend to users the operator has not reasonably determined are not minors.

The last two bills in this package deal with governing board policies regulating the use of smartphones and social media on school campuses. Probably the most well-known of the bills is AB 3216 by Assembly Member Josh Hoover (R-Folsom), which requires school governing boards to adopt, no later than July 1, 2026, a policy to limit or prohibit the use of smartphones by students while on campus. The Governor also signed SB 1283 by Senator Henry Stern (D-Los Angeles), which authorizes school governing boards to adopt a policy to limit or prohibit the use of social media by a student while the student is at a schoolsite or while under the supervision and control of a local educational agency (LEA) employee.

New law bans forced-outing policies in schools.

As the rights of transgender and other LGTBQ+ students have been brought to the forefront of political debate in recent years, Governor Newsom issued a strong statement in support of these students when he signed AB 1955 by Assembly Member Chris Ward (D-San Diego), otherwise known as the Support Academic Futures and Educators for Today's Youth (SAFETY) Act. Under the Act, LEAs, and their governing boards, are prohibited from enacting or enforcing any policy, rule or regulation that would require a school employee or contractor to disclose information regarding a student's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression to another person without the student's consent. The bill also prohibits a school employee or contractor from being required to disclose such information and protects them from retaliation for complying with the bill's provisions.

In support of the bill, Assembly Member Ward emphasized that the bill was about ensuring LGTBQ+ students can come out at their own speed, writing:

> *Young people thrive when they have parental support and feel safe sharing their authentic selves at home, but it can be harmful to force young people to share their full identities before they're ready. AB 1955…strengthens existing protections, ensuring all students are safe, supported, and not isolated due to any part of their identity, as well as supports families to have personal conversations and work towards family acceptance on their own terms.*

The bill comes after, in 2023, a number of school district governing boards, including Chino Valley Unified School District, Rocklin Unified School District, Temecula Valley Unified School District, and Murrieta Valley Unified School District, adopted nearly identical policies that would require schools to inform parents whenever their child requests to use a name or pronouns different from that on their birth certificate or official records.

The policies were immediately condemned by California Attorney General Rob Bonta, who stated, "The rise in school districts adopting policies that target California's vulnerable LGBTQ+ student population is of grave concern. My office…will not tolerate districts compromising the safety and privacy of transgender and gender nonconforming students." The Attorney General would go on to open an investigation into Chino Valley's policy before ultimately successfully suing the District to block enforcement of the policy. Given this aggressive approach, that the state would pursue legislation codifying the state's stance on these "forced-outing policies" was all but inevitable.

Since being signed back in July, the law has been met with pushback in parts of the state. The day after being signed, Chino Valley Unified filed a lawsuit against the state claiming that AB 1955 violates parental rights under the First Amendment, the Fourteenth Amendment, and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and seeking an injunction against the bill's enforcement. The Orange County Board of Education has since joined the lawsuit as a plaintiff. In September, the Huntington Beach City Council voted to declare the city a "Parent's Right to Know City," prohibiting educators in the city from withholding from parents information about their child's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, and subsequently filed its own lawsuit against the state.

However, since the outcomes for either of these cases has yet to be determined, AB 1955 is still on track to go into effect on January 1, 2025.

Increased accountability and opportunity for students in juvenile court or other alternative schools.

Three bills were signed by the Governor that increase transparency as well as provide better access to learning opportunities for students in juvenile court or other alternative schools such as community or continuation schools.

All LEAs are required to report and examine student suspension and expulsion rates on their local control accountability plan (LCAP) and annual updates. When those rates are made public, the LEA can come under scrutiny. There has been a concern in the Legislature that some LEAs might be transferring students to alternative schools for disciplinary reasons rather than suspending or expelling them to avoid negative attention. AB 1984 by Assembly Member Akilah Weber (D-San Diego) allows for the creation of a more transparent process by requiring LEAs to provide data on any transfers to the California Department of Education (CDE). The bill also requires CDE to advise LEAs against transferring students to avoid reporting suspensions or expulsions.

The second bill, AB 2176 by Assembly Member Marc Berman (D-Menlo Park), increases transparency and accountability for students, but is specific to those students in juvenile court schools. Given the nature of juvenile court schools, one might expect that student attendance is high. Yet, in some counties, because of a practice of barring students from school for disciplinary reasons, chronic absenteeism is a problem. AB 2176 requires the Office of Youth and Community Restoration (OYCR) to first develop an annual report on chronic absenteeism rates in juvenile court schools, then, if funding is provided, investigate the reasons for absenteeism and provide technical assistance to ameliorate the identified causes.

Also related to juvenile court schools, AB 2181 by Assembly Member Mike Gipson (D-Carson), focuses on increasing opportunities for students. Currently, students in juvenile court schools who complete state coursework requirements for graduation are automatically issued a diploma, unless the student chooses to defer receipt of a diploma in order to continue to be enrolled while detained. AB 2181 eliminates the process whereby a student defers receipt of a diploma, and instead requires that students in their third or fourth year of high school who meet state graduation requirements be exempted from local graduation requirements unless it is determined that they can meet those

requirements. It also permits students who are determined to be able to complete the local graduation requirements after the student's fourth year of high school, to remain enrolled after the student's fourth year of high school. AB 2181 ensures that court school students have the same opportunities as other highly mobile populations (foster, homeless, and military-connected youth) to gain additional career and college preparatory skills prior to graduation.

Prohibition of certain dyes in foods might impact school meals.

Over the last few years there have been a number of legislative proposals related to food products in schools as well as the use of certain food dyes. This year we have one bill that touches both areas. AB 2316 by Assembly Member Jesse Gabriel (D-Encino), which prohibits LEAs from offering, selling or otherwise providing any food or beverages containing specific food dye additives, received quite a bit of attention but, in reality, makes very modest changes to school meal programs over time. In addition, the school nutrition community worked very hard with the author to craft a bill that protects students as well as school meal programs.

First, the majority of school foods are already free from the ingredients specified in AB 2316 because of current state and federal nutrition standards.

Second, the bill only applies to food items not provided to LEAs through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food in Schools program. These USDA foods are typically referred to as commodity foods, usually in the form of whole cheese, meat, and vegetables. Schools can utilize their commodity foods to create other food items. The bulk of food served in school meal programs comes from the USDA and all are exempted from the requirements of AB 2316 because California cannot regulate the USDA.

Finally, school food manufacturers have until December 31, 2027 to modify any products that might contain the prohibited food dye additives. The time will allow for current product supplies to be utilized, substitute materials to be incorporated, packaging to be redone and for education and awareness to be provided to the education community. The timeline also aligns with one from the USDA for some changes coming from federal requirements.

Changes to suicide prevention policies.

Since the COVID pandemic, California has seen an increase in student suicides. Current law requires LEAs to have procedures in place relating to suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention that were developed in consultation with school and community stakeholders, school-employed mental health professionals, and suicide prevention experts. In addition, CDE must identify one or more evidence-based online training programs that a LEA can use to train school staff and pupils as part of the LEA's policy on pupil suicide prevention.

Current suicide prevention policies often require the calling of 911 to assist a student suffering a mental health crisis. However, depending on the circumstances, the presence of law enforcement may escalate rather than deescalate the situation. SB 1318 by Senator Aisha Wahab (D-Silicon Valley)

attempts to provide students with the mental health support they may need in a time of crisis by requiring CDE to update its model suicide prevention policy to address crisis intervention protocols in the event of a student suicide crisis. The model policy must cover the process by which staff and external agencies are deployed to address a pupil suicide crisis, including a prioritization of the use of school mental health professionals. The goal of the bill is to clarify that the involvement of law enforcement officers, including resource officers, should be the final step to protect a child's life, and that connection with mental health professionals should be the first.

During the next regularly scheduled review of their suicide prevention policy on or after July 1, 2026, LEAs will be required to include crisis intervention protocols aligned with the policy developed by CDE.

The Governor signed the following student services bills:

After School

AB 1113 (McCarty) - California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System: expanded learning opportunity programs.

AB 1113 requires CDE, beginning with the 2025–26 school year, to define and collect, as part of the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS), annual pupil enrollment data for each pupil enrolled in an expanded learning opportunity program, including, but not limited to, the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELO-P), the After School Education and Safety (ASES) Program, and the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program. The bill also requires CDE to identify and reduce data reporting redundancies and to provide guidance and recommendations to LEAs in the collection of pupil data for these programs.

Chapter 1003, Statutes of 2024

Alternative Education

AB 1984 (Weber) - Pupil discipline: transfer reporting.

This bill requires, commencing with the 2026–27 school year, CDE to collect and publish on its website, and school districts, county offices of education (COEs), and charter schools to provide to CDE, data on pupil transfers due to disciplinary reasons, including whether the pupil transferred to an alternative school based on a referral by the school. The bill also requires CDE, when providing guidance on its website about reducing disproportionate discipline of pupil subgroups in schools, to advise LEAs against the use of transfers to avoid reporting suspensions and expulsions.

Chapter 368, Statutes of 2024

AB 2176 (Berman) - Juvenile court schools: chronic absenteeism rates.

AB 2176 requires the OYCR within the California Health and Human Services Agency to develop an annual report on chronic absenteeism rates in juvenile court schools. The bill also, subject to available funding, requires the OYCR to investigate the reasons for absenteeism at juvenile court schools with chronic absenteeism rates of 15% or more and, if after an investigation the OYCR determines that insufficient staff, transportation, punitive policies, or any policies under the court school's control are

contributing to chronic absenteeism rates, requires the OYCR to provide technical assistance to address the identified causes of the chronic absenteeism.
Chapter 385, Statutes of 2024

AB 2181 (Gipson) - Juvenile court school pupils: graduation requirements and continued education options.
This bill requires a COE to exempt a pupil from all coursework or other requirements of the COE that are in addition to the statewide coursework requirements if the pupil (1) transfers into a juvenile court school any time after the completion of the pupil's 2nd year of high school, (2) completes the statewide coursework requirements for graduation while attending a juvenile court school, and (3) is in their 3rd or 4th year of high school, unless the COE makes a finding that the pupil is reasonably able to complete these local graduation requirements in time to graduate from high school by the end of the pupil's 4th year of high school. The bill also requires the COE to notify a pupil who may qualify for the exemption from local graduation requirements, the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the pupil, and the pupil's social worker and probation officer of the availability of the exemption and whether the pupil qualifies for the exemption, within 30 calendar days of the date that the pupil transfers into a juvenile court school for an enrollment period in the juvenile court school of at least 30 days.
Chapter 703, Statutes of 2024

Child Nutrition

AB 2316 (Gabriel) - Pupil nutrition: substances: prohibition.
AB 2316, beginning December 31, 2027, prohibits a public school from offering, selling, or otherwise providing any food containing Blue 1, Blue 2, Green 3, Red 40, Yellow 5, or Yellow 6. The bill exempts from this prohibition foods provided by the USDA Foods in Schools program.
Chapter 914, Statutes of 2024

Homeless/Foster Youth

AB 2137 (Quirk-Silva) - Homeless and foster youth.
The Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program authorizes a COE, or a consortium of COEs, to apply to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) for grant funding to operate an education-based foster youth services coordinating program. Additionally, as a condition of receiving funds, current law requires a foster youth services coordinating program to develop and implement a foster youth services plan that includes, among other things, authorization of a school district, when specified conditions apply, to enter into a temporary agreement with the foster youth services coordinating program to provide tutoring, mentoring, and counseling services to pupils. This bill instead authorizes a foster youth services coordinating program to provide tutoring, mentoring, and counseling services to a foster youth pupil, if a foster youth educational services coordinator determines that they are unable to secure those services from the foster youth pupil's school district and if those services are established as needed and identified by the foster youth educational services coordinator.
Chapter 382, Statutes of 2024

AB 3223 (Wilson) - Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program.

Current law establishes the Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program, under the administration of the SPI, to provide supplemental funding to COEs to coordinate and ensure that districts within a COE's jurisdiction are providing services to pupils in foster care pursuant to a foster youth services coordinating plan with the purpose of ensuring positive educational outcomes. This bill adds to the definition of "pupil in foster care" a child who is the subject of a juvenile court petition and has been identified by a county child welfare agency, a probation department, or an Indian tribe meeting specified criteria as being at imminent risk of removal and placement into foster care.

Chapter 850, Statutes of 2024

Mental Health

AB 1282 (Lowenthal) - Mental health: impacts of social media.

AB 1282 requires CDPH, in consultation with the Behavioral Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission, to report to the Legislature, on or before December 31, 2026, a statewide strategy to understand, communicate, and mitigate mental health risks associated with the use of social media by children and youth. The bill requires the report to include, among other things, (1) the degree to which the mental health of children and youth is positively, negatively, or neutrally impacted by use of social media and (2) recommendations to strengthen children and youth resiliency strategies and California's use of mental health services related to social media use.

Chapter 807, Statutes of 2024

SB 976 (Skinner) - Protecting Our Kids from Social Media Addiction Act.

SB 976, among other things, prohibits the operator of an addictive internet-based service or application to provide an addictive feed to a user, unless the operator (1) does not have actual knowledge that the user is a minor, (2) has reasonably determined, beginning January 1, 2027, that the user is not a minor, or (3) has obtained verifiable parental consent to provide an addictive feed to the user who is a minor. The bill also prohibits the operator of an addictive internet-base service or application to send notifications to a user that the operator has actual knowledge is a minor, between the hours of 12 am and 6 am, and between the hours of 8 am and 3 pm, from Monday to Friday from September through May. Beginning January 1, 2027, the bill applies the same prohibition on notifications for a user the operator has not reasonably determined is not a minor.

Chapter 321, Statutes of 2024

SB 1063 (Grove) - Pupil safety: identification cards.

This bill, commencing July 1, 2025, requires a public school or private school that serves pupils in any of grades 7 to 12, inclusive, and that issues pupil identification cards, to have printed on the identification cards the number for the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. The bill also expressly authorizes these schools to additionally have printed on either side of the card a quick response (QR) code that links to the mental health resources internet website of the county in which the school is located. The bill also provides that if a school subject to this requirement has a supply of unissued, noncompliant identification cards as of July 1, 2025, the school shall issue the noncompliant identification cards until that supply is depleted.

Chapter 642, Statutes of 2024

SB 1318 (Wahab) - Pupil health: suicide prevention policies: pupil suicide crisis.

SB 1318 requires, on or before July 1, 2026, CDE to update its model policy on suicide prevention to address crisis intervention protocols in the event of a pupil suicide crisis, including the process by which staff and external agencies are deployed to address a pupil suicide crisis and limiting the involvement and notification of law enforcement to situations in which a pupil's life is in imminent danger and their needs cannot be addressed by a mental health professional. This bill also requires, on or after July 1, 2026, the governing board or body of a LEA to update their pupil suicide prevention policy to include these crisis intervention protocols.

Chapter 645, Statutes of 2024

SB 1353 (Wahab) - Youth Bill of Rights.

This bill specifies that the Youth Bill of Rights includes the right to receive adequate, appropriate, and timely behavioral health services.

Chapter 163, Statutes of 2024

Pupil Health

AB 1955 (Ward) - Support Academic Futures and Educators for Today's Youth Act.

AB 1955 provides that an employee or a contractor of a school district, COE, charter school, or state special school for the blind or the deaf cannot be required to disclose any information related to a pupil's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression to any other person without the pupil's consent, unless otherwise required by state or federal law. The bill also prohibits a LEA from enacting or enforcing any policy, rule, or administrative regulation that would require such a disclosure and declares any policy, regulation, guidance, or other action of an LEA that is inconsistent with this prohibition invalid and without any force or effect.

Chapter 95, Statutes of 2024

AB 2630 (Bonta) - Pupil health: oral health assessment.

Existing law requires a pupil, while enrolled in kindergarten in a public school, or while enrolled in first grade in a public school if the pupil was not previously enrolled in kindergarten in a public school, to present proof of having received an oral health assessment by a licensed dentist, or other licensed or registered dental health professional operating within the professional's scope of practice, that was performed no earlier than 12 months before the date of the initial enrollment of the pupil. AB 2630 defines "kindergarten" for these purposes as including both transitional kindergarten and kindergarten, and clarifies that the proof is only required once during a 2-year kindergarten program.

Chapter 838, Statutes of 2024

SB 1248 (Hurtado) - Pupil health: extreme weather conditions: physical activity.

SB 1248 requires CDE, on or before January 1, 2026, and in consultation with relevant stakeholders and experts, to compile and post on CDE's website, standardized guidelines specifying temperature thresholds or index ratings that trigger modifications to pupil physical activities during extreme weather conditions. The guidelines will be required to consider relevant factors, including, but not limited to, pupil ages, harmful duration of exposure to extreme weather conditions, overall pupil safety, and available mitigation measures. The bill also requires LEAs, on or before July 1, 2026, to develop,

adopt, and implement weather protocols for extreme weather conditions that incorporate the standardized guidelines compiled by CDE. Implementation of both of these requirements is subject to there being an appropriation made for these purposes in the annual budget.
Chapter 463, Statutes of 2024

Student Services

AB 1825 (Muratsuchi) - California Freedom to Read Act.
This bill requires every public library jurisdiction that directly receives any state funding, excluding school libraries, to establish, adopt, and maintain a written and publicly accessible collection development policy for its libraries by January 1, 2026. The bill also requires the collection development policy to, among other things, (1) guide the selection and deselection of library materials and (2) establish a process for community members to share their concerns regarding library materials and request materials be reconsidered for inclusion in the library's collection.
Chapter 941, Statutes of 2024

AB 2165 (Reyes) - Pupil instruction: financial aid application.
Current law requires the governing body of a school district, COE, or charter school to confirm that a grade 12 pupil who has not opted out, completes and submits a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or, if the pupil is exempt from paying nonresident tuition under current law, completes and submits a form for purposes of the California Dream Act. This bill requires a LEA, before exempting a pupil or the pupil's parent or legal guardian from the requirement to complete and submit a FAFSA, a form for purposes of the California Dream Act, or an opt-out form, to provide specified information to the pupil and the pupil's parent or legal guardian, including the purpose and benefits of the FAFSA and the consequences of not completing a FAFSA.
Chapter 702 Statutes of 2024

AB 2179 (Davies) - Pupil services: local apprenticeship programs and preapprenticeship programs: notification of parents or guardians.
This bill requires a school district to, at the beginning of the first semester or quarter of the regular school term, provide information on local apprenticeship programs and preapprenticeship programs to the parents or guardians of pupils admitted to, or advancing to, grades 11 and 12, as part of its required annual notification to parents and guardians.
Chapter 62, Statutes of 2024

SB 939 (Umberg) - Educational equity: schoolsite and community resources: neurodivergent pupils.
This bill expands the information the SPI is required to post on CDE's website to include information to support students who have been subjected to discrimination or bullying on the basis of neurodiversity and, beginning with the 2025-26 school year, requires LEAs to ensure that resources related to neurodiversity are readily accessible to students and parents. The bill also requires CDE to include in its online training module information about how to support students who are bullied for being neurodivergent.
Chapter 907, Statutes of 2024

SB 1335 (Archuleta) - The California Cadet Corps.

Current law authorizes the Adjutant General to appoint officers in the California Cadet Corps and to order members of the corps into temporary active state duty. This bill, among other things, authorizes the establishment of an independent unit outside of a school, college, or community college under the guidance and control of a sponsoring organization.

Chapter 207, Statutes of 2024

Capitol Advisors Group has produced a set of comprehensive client briefs detailing new education laws that were passed by the Legislature and signed into law by Governor Newsom in 2024. Each brief is organized by subject area and includes an executive summary highlighting major changes we think you should know about. Bills signed by the Governor take effect on January 1, 2025, unless the bill specifically states otherwise.