

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2023 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 734
Ways and Means

(Delegates Hill and Wu)

Youth Sports Programs - Registrations, Personnel, and Policy

This bill requires annual registration and training of “youth sports program personnel,” including volunteers who participate in a youth sports program. A youth sports program must provide specified health and safety information to each parent or guardian who registers a youth athlete, and the parent or guardian must submit a signed acknowledgment of receipt of this information. The bill generally applies to youth sports programs below the high school level of play. The definition of concussion under relevant law is altered to also include certain brain injuries resulting from any type of direct or indirect hit to the head or body. The definition of a youth athlete is expanded to include a youth athlete who participates in a youth sports program at a private school facility.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill is not anticipated to affect State finances or operations.

Local Effect: Expenditures may increase for local governments that operate youth sports programs that do not already meet the bill’s requirements, as discussed below. **This bill may impose a mandate on a unit of local government.**

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful.

Analysis

Bill Summary:

Required Registry of Youth Sports Program Personnel

“Youth sports program personnel” means any paid or volunteer coach, official, athletic trainer, team administrator, or staff member who participates in a youth sports program. A youth sports program must maintain and annually update a registry of the youth sports program personnel who participate in the program. At a minimum, the registry must include for each individual:

- a valid photo identification;
- a completed criminal history records check (CHRC) or equivalent alternative screening;
- a signed acknowledgment of receipt and understanding of the policies and protocols of the youth sports program on safety priorities to minimize risk of harm to youth athletes, including removal and return-to-play policies; and
- documentation of completion of annual training in (1) heat illness recognition, prevention, and treatment; (2) concussion awareness; (3) child safety; and (4) levels of contact training consistent with best practices.

Youth sports program personnel must complete or renew a registration each year before participating in any athletic event or activity. Personnel must display proof of registration with the youth sports program to gain entry into the arena of play for any athletic event, practice, or game. An individual’s proof of registration must generally be displayed at all times and be available for inspection.

Required Information

A youth sports program must provide to each parent or guardian who registers a youth athlete specified health and safety information, as well as a notice that specifies the potential for (1) brain injury during any athletic event or activity and (2) heat-related illnesses for an athletic event or activity played outdoors during the summer months. The parent or guardian of a youth athlete must sign and submit to the youth sports program an acknowledgment of receipt of the required information.

Additionally, a youth sports program must provide a copy of its removal and return-to-play policy to all youth sports program personnel and each parent or guardian of a registered youth athlete, as well as post the policy on its website, if available.

Current Law: Youth sports programs must make available information on concussions, head injuries, and sudden cardiac arrest developed by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to coaches, youth athletes, and the parents or guardians of youth athletes. A coach of a youth sports program is required to review the information.

A youth athlete or student athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or other head injury in a practice or game must be removed from play at that time and may not return to play until the youth athlete has obtained written clearance from a licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussions. Each school must use the graduated return to play protocols instituted in the [Policies and Programs on Concussions for Public Schools and Youth Sport Programs](#).

Youth sports programs seeking to use school facilities must verify in writing that they have distributed concussion information to parents or guardians and have received verifiable acknowledgment of receipt. Each youth sports program must annually affirm to the local school system its compliance with concussion information procedures.

MSDE must develop policies and implement a program to provide awareness to coaches, school personnel, students, and the parents or guardians of students, in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), each local board of education, and other specified entities, on:

- the nature and warning signs of sudden cardiac arrest, including fainting, difficulty breathing, chest pains, dizziness, and abnormal heart rate; and
- the risks associated with continuing to play or practice after experiencing a symptom of sudden cardiac arrest.

Before an individual participates in an authorized athletic activity on school property, the county board of education shall provide, or require that a third party provide (1) information on sudden cardiac arrest to the individual and, if applicable, a parent or guardian of the individual and (2) notice that acknowledgment of the receipt of the information by the individual and, if applicable, the parent or guardian of the individual, is required. A youth sports program that uses a public school facility shall provide annually to the county board or the board's agent a statement of intent to comply for all its athletic activities with sudden cardiac arrest awareness requirements. A youth sports program that does not use a public school facility is encouraged to follow these guidelines.

MSDE, in collaboration with MDH, each local board of education, and other specified entities, must develop a [model policy for preseason-practice heat acclimatization guidelines for student athletes](#). Each local board must adopt preseason-practice heat acclimatization guidelines for student athletes consistent with the model policy.

Local Expenditures: Some youth sports programs are operated by local governments, and often local school systems have agreements with youth sports programs to use their facilities. Expenditures may increase for local governments that operate such programs to comply with the bill's requirements, including establishing and maintaining a registry of youth sports program personnel and providing annual training and proof of registration. Programs may also pay for personnel to complete required CHRCs or alternative screenings (to the extent they do not already comply). Local school systems may have to update their use-of-facility agreements. To the extent that some jurisdictions already meet the bill's requirements, the impact on local governments may be reduced. Required information can likely be distributed with existing resources.

Small Business Effect: Some youth sports programs are small businesses. If they do not already meet the bill's requirements, small businesses that operate such programs must establish and maintain a registry of youth sports program personnel and provide annual training and proof of registration. Programs may also pay for personnel to complete required CHRCs or alternative screenings (to the extent they do not already comply).

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See HB 435 of 2022 and HB 1345 of 2020.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Department of Health; Department of Legislative Services

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