

PUBLIC SCHOOL CODE OF 1949 - SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST AND
ELECTROCARDIOGRAM TESTING

Act of Jul. 23, 2020, P.L. 695, No. 73

Cl. 24

Session of 2020

No. 2020-73

SB 836

AN ACT

Amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), entitled "An act relating to the public school system, including certain provisions applicable as well to private and parochial schools; amending, revising, consolidating and changing the laws relating thereto," in school health services, providing for sudden cardiac arrest and electrocardiogram testing; and making a repeal.

The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hereby enacts as follows:

Section 1. The act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, is amended by adding a section to read:

Section 1425. Sudden Cardiac Arrest and Electrocardiogram Testing.--(a) (1) The department and the Department of Education shall develop and post on their publicly accessible Internet websites guidelines and other relevant materials to inform and educate students participating in or desiring to participate in an athletic activity, their parents and their coaches about:

(i) The nature and warning signs of sudden cardiac arrest, including the risks associated with continuing to play or practice after experiencing one (1) or more symptoms of sudden cardiac arrest, including fainting, difficulty breathing, chest pains, dizziness and abnormal racing heart rate.

(ii) Information about electrocardiogram testing, including the potential risks, benefits and evidentiary basis behind electrocardiogram testing.

(iii) The option to request, from the family's medical provider, the administration of an electrocardiogram, in addition to the comprehensive initial participation physical examination, at a cost to be incurred by the parent or guardian.

(2) In developing the guidelines and materials, the department and the Department of Education shall consult with a nationally accredited cardiology association and may utilize existing materials developed by organizations such as Parent Heart Watch, Sudden Arrhythmia Death Syndromes Foundation and the American College of Cardiology.

(3) A student participating in or desiring to participate in an athletic activity and the student's parent or guardian shall, each school year and prior to participation by the student in an athletic activity, sign and return to the student's school an acknowledgment of receipt and review of a sudden cardiac arrest symptoms and warning signs information sheet that includes information about electrocardiogram testing developed under this subsection.

(b) A school entity may hold an informational meeting prior to the start of each athletic season for all ages of competitors regarding the symptoms and warning signs of sudden cardiac arrest and information about electrocardiogram testing developed

under this subsection. In addition to students, parents, coaches and other school officials, informational meetings may include physicians, pediatric and adult cardiologists and athletic trainers.

(c) (1) A student who, as determined by a game official, coach from the student's team, certified athletic trainer, licensed physician or other official designated by the student's school entity, exhibits signs or symptoms of sudden cardiac arrest while participating in an athletic activity shall be removed by the coach from participation at that time, subject to clause (3).

(2) If a student is known to have exhibited signs or symptoms of sudden cardiac arrest at any time prior to or following an athletic activity, the student shall be prevented from participating in an athletic activity, subject to clause (3).

(3) A student removed or prevented from participating in an athletic activity under clause (1) or (2) shall not return to participation until the student is evaluated and cleared for return to participation in writing by a licensed physician, certified registered nurse practitioner or cardiologist.

(4) In order to help determine whether a student is ready to return to play, the licensed physician or certified registered nurse practitioner may consult any other licensed or certified medical professionals.

(d) (1) Once each school year, a coach of an athletic activity shall complete the sudden cardiac arrest training course offered by a provider approved by the department.

(2) A coach of an athletic activity shall not coach the athletic activity until the coach completes the training course required under this subsection.

(e) The governing body of a school entity shall establish the following minimum penalties for a coach found in violation of the requirements under subsection (c), which penalties shall take effect July 30, 2014:

(1) For a first violation, suspension from coaching any athletic activity for the remainder of the season.

(2) For a second violation, suspension from coaching any athletic activity for the remainder of the season and for the next season.

(3) For a third violation, permanent suspension from coaching any athletic activity.

(f) The sponsors of youth athletic activities not associated with a school entity are encouraged to follow the guidance stated in this section.

(g) Nothing in this section shall be construed to:

(1) abridge or limit any rights provided under a collective bargaining agreement in effect on July 30, 2012, or any rights provided under the act of July 23, 1970 (P.L.563, No.195), known as the "Public Employee Relations Act"; or

(2) create, establish, expand, reduce, contract or eliminate any civil liability on the part of any school entity or school employee.

(h) As used in this section--

"Athletic activity" means all of the following:

(1) Interscholastic athletics.

(2) An athletic contest or competition, other than interscholastic athletics, that is sponsored by or associated with a school entity, including cheerleading, club-sponsored sports activities and sports activities sponsored by school-affiliated organizations.

(3) Noncompetitive cheerleading that is sponsored by or associated with a school entity.

(4) Practices, interschool practices and scrimmages for all of the activities listed under clauses (1), (2) and (3).

"Department" means the Department of Health of the Commonwealth.

"Interscholastic athletics" means as defined in section 1602-A.

"School entity" means as defined in section 1602-A.

Section 2. Repeals are as follows:

(1) The General Assembly declares that the repeal under paragraph (2) is necessary to effectuate the addition of section 1425 of the act.

(2) The act of May 30, 2012 (P.L.574, No.59), known as the Sudden Cardiac Arrest Prevention Act, is repealed.

Section 3. The addition of section 1425 of the act is a continuation of the act of May 30, 2012 (P.L.574, No.59), known as the Sudden Cardiac Arrest Prevention Act. Except as otherwise provided in section 1425, all activities initiated under the Sudden Cardiac Arrest Prevention Act shall continue and remain in full force and effect and may be completed under section 1425 of the act. Orders, regulations, rules and decisions which were made under the Sudden Cardiac Arrest Prevention Act and which are in effect on the effective date of section 2(2) of this act shall remain in full force and effect until revoked, vacated or modified under section 1425 of the act. Contracts, obligations and collective bargaining agreements entered into under the Sudden Cardiac Arrest Prevention Act are not affected nor impaired by the repeal of the Sudden Cardiac Arrest Prevention Act.

Section 4. This act shall take effect in 60 days.

APPROVED--The 23rd day of July, A.D. 2020.

TOM WOLF