New laws in effect on Jan. 1 that affect children, families and schools

A total of 807 bills were passed and signed into law during the last legislative session and most went into effect on January 1. Here are some of the new laws that affect children, families and schools:

- **High school exit exam**: High school seniors are no longer required to take the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) to graduate, thanks to SB 172. The bill lifts the requirement through the 2017-2018 school year while the state decides whether to keep the test or not. Students in senior classes from 2004 on who completed graduation requirements but failed the CAHSEE can apply for diplomas.

- **Special education - dyslexia**: AB 1369 requires the State Superintendent to develop program guidelines to help teachers, parents and school staff identify and assess dyslexic students and provide them better educational services.

- **Fees for diploma alternatives**: Education programs are prohibited from charging homeless youth fees to take the proficiency or equivalency tests. (SB 252)

- **Vaccines**: SB 277 requires full vaccination for most children to enroll in school. Schools will begin vetting students to ensure they have their shots in July, before the 2016-2017 school year begins.

- **College and Career Access Pathways**: AB 288 allows a community college district and a school district to create a partnership to provide a seamless pathway from high school to community college for career technical education or preparation for transfer, improving high school graduation rates, or helping high school pupils achieve college and career readiness.

- **Competition cheer becomes a sport**: The California Interscholastic Federation is required to develop guidelines to classify competition cheer as an official interscholastic sport. (AB 949)

- **Lactation accommodations**: Schools must provide places for students who are mothers to breast feed or pump breast milk. (AB 302)

- **Student representatives on school boards**: SB 532 establishes clear guidelines for appointing or removing student representatives from school boards.

- **Sex education**: Student participation in sexual education courses is currently voluntary. AB 329 makes the courses mandatory unless parents specifically seek an opt-out. It also updates curricula to include comprehensive, age-appropriate sexual health education, including HIV prevention and the spectrum of gender identity.

- **Yes means yes**: School districts that require health classes to graduate must include instruction in sexual harassment and violence, including the “yes means yes” standard of consent to sexual acts. In other words, students will learn they should be getting explicit approval from partners. (SB 695)

- **Consent defense in sexual battery cases**: SB 14 prohibits consent from being a defense in any sexual battery civil action if the person committing the sexual battery is a specified adult who is in a position of authority.
• **Child safety seats:** Beginning in January 2017, children up to age two must be in rear-facing car seats. Currently, children are required to ride rear facing only until one year of age. AB 53 will not apply to children that weigh more than 40 pounds or are 40 inches or taller.

• **Sales of vapor products:** AB 216 makes it illegal to sell or provide materials that deliver non-nicotine products in a vaporized state to anyone under the age of 18.

• **Earbud use:** While operating a motor vehicle or bicycle, drivers and cyclists cannot wear headsets or ear buds that cover, rest on or are inserted in both ears unless it is a hearing aid. (SB 491)

• **Toy guns:** Realistic-looking airsoft guns will be required to have more features that distinguish them as toys, such as fluorescent trigger guards, thanks to SB 199.

• **Guns on campus:** Concealed firearms are barred form college campuses and K-12 school grounds under AB 707, which was sponsored by the California College and University Police Chiefs Association as a public safety corrective.

• **Gun restraining orders:** AB 1014 allows family members to obtain a restraining order temporarily barring gun ownership for a relative they believe to be at risk of committing an act of violence.

• **Removal, suspension, or expulsion of community college students:** California community colleges can suspend or expel a student for a sexual assault committed off campus. (SB 186)

• **Surplus military equipment:** SB 242 requires the approval of a school district governing board before a school district police department can receive surplus military equipment.

• **Children testifying as witnesses:** Children 13 and younger who are witnesses in violent crimes may testify in court by remote video hook-up. (SB 176)

• **Immigration status in civil actions:** Courts cannot consider a child's immigration status in civil actions involving liability. (AB 560)

• **Health care coverage for immigrants:** The state will spend $40 million to provide health coverage under the Medi-Cal program to children under age 19 who are not in the country legally. (SB 4)

• **Hoverboards:** All electrically motorized boards are allowed to be ridden wherever bicycles are ridden — within bicycle lanes, pathways and roadways. (AB 604)

• **Bicycles and slowed traffic:** The existing traffic law that requires slow vehicles to pull over when impeding vehicles has been extended to include bicycles by AB 208. Individuals and large groups of bikes will now have to pull over whenever five or more vehicles are being slowed by them.

• **Reporting traffic crashes:** SB 491 requires that any traffic crash with combined property damage of $1,000 must be reported to the DMV via SR-1 forms. Previously, the dollar amount was $750.

• **Minimum wage increase:** The state’s minimum wage increases from $9 to $10 per hour.

• **Motor Voter Act:** A new automated system will register eligible citizens to vote when they go to the DMV to get their driver’s license, though the process won't begin until a new statewide voter database is up and running, which is expected after the June primaries. (AB 1461)

• **Election poll workers:** Non-citizens in high school may serve as election poll workers. (AB 554)

More information about these new laws is available at:

★ www.leginfo.ca.gov
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