

On The Alert!

Date: August 25, 2017
Attention: ASCIP Members
Affected Department(s): Risk Management, Admin, Athletics, Coaches, Staff
Applicability: K-12 Districts and Charter Schools

COMPETITIVE CHEERLEADING AND DISTRICT RISK

Because of Assembly Bill 949 and effective July 1, 2017, the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) recognizes [Competitive Cheer](#) as an interscholastic sport as of the start of the 2017-2018 school year. CIF has developed a set of guidelines, procedures, and safety standards for this new sport, including safety education requirements for coaches (paid and unpaid). Districts that offer any form of cheerleading, including Sideline Cheer which may be impacted if the cheer squads compete against others, should review their programs to see if their cheer programs fall under this new sport, and if program activities are subject to CIF Bylaws. District boards should ask their athletic departments the following questions:

- Do our existing cheer teams participate in any competitions?
- If so, do the teams currently have coaches who meet the safety guidelines and certification requirements mandated by the new law?
- How does the District ensure that they are certified prior to competition?
- Is there interest in offering Competitive Cheer in the future?
- If so, how will the District facilitate funding to comply with Title IX requirement for parity in terms of the quality of resources, opportunities, and scholarships available to male and female athletes?

The California School Boards Association (CSBA) has published a [Factsheet - Competition Cheer as Sport: AB 949](#) which addresses most issues related to this development.

NEXT STEPS

ASCIP recommends that Districts with cheerleading programs adopt the CSBA recommendations. Other sites worth exploring include the National Federation of State High School Association (NFHS) [Spirit Rule Book](#) (NFHS is official rule book followed by CIF), American Association of Cheerleading Coaches and Administrators' (AACCA's) [Cheerleader Safety Rules](#) and the AACCA [Spirit Safety Certification](#).

WHAT CONSTITUTES A SPORT FOR TITLE IX PURPOSES?

The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has developed a detailed set of guidelines to determine if an activity meets the criteria for a sport. Several factors are considered including activity structure, administration, team preparation, and competition. Furthermore, an activity must demonstrate the following to be in order to be recognized as a sport.

- Its exclusive purpose is competition
- It has a developed regular and post season schedule
- It is governed and regulated by an established national governing body
- It has an objective and consistent scoring system

OCR has not yet recognized competitive cheer as a sport. Districts should consider the above factors in anticipation of this process. Nevertheless, it is important to note OCR takes such factors into consideration when investigating Title IX related complaints.

Please contact your ASCIP risk services consultant at (562) 404-8029 to discuss further.