

Athletic Physicals - Regulations and FAQ's

Source: Keenan & Associates

Education Code

49458. When a school district or a county superintendent of schools requires a physical examination as a condition of participation in an interscholastic athletic program, the physical examination may be performed by a physician and surgeon or physician assistant practicing in compliance with Chapter 7.7 (commencing with Section 3500) of Division 2 of the Business and Professions Code.

The California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) Bylaws

503 (G). **Physical Examinations.** As a condition of membership, schools will require that students receive an annual physical examination conducted by a medical practitioner certifying that the student is fit to participate in athletics. The report of the examination will be on a school-board approved form that includes a health history. The physical examination must be performed before a student may try out, practice or participate in interscholastic athletic competition. A student will be excused from this physical examination provided there is compliance with the Education Code provisions concerning Parent(s)/Guardian(s)/Caregiver(s) Refusal to Consent. The CIF Health and Safety Committee strongly recommends that schools use the Pre-Participation Physical Examination Form that is endorsed by five major medical societies; American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Society for Sports Medicine, American Orthopedic Sports Medicine, and the American Osteopathic Academy of Sports Medicine. All CIF schools must have board-approved forms.

Frequently Asked Questions

- Q.** Are all students wanting to participate in interscholastic athletics required to have a pre-participation physical?
- A.** The California Education Code (Ed. Code) has no specific requirement but section 49458 does have guidelines if a district chooses to institute a pre-participation physical examination program. The CIF bylaws requires the physical examinations as a condition of membership. Both allow parents/guardians/caregivers to opt out per Ed. Code's provision concerning refusal to consent.
- Q.** How extensive are the physicals required to be?
- A.** The Ed. Code has no specific guidelines for the physical but does require each District, if they have chosen to require the physicals, adopt a board-approved form that must be completed by the physician. CIF also does not require a particular form, but has endorsed and recommends the Pre-Participation Physical Examination Form available on the CIF website. That form requires a medical history, and medical evaluation and a clearance. The exam covers appearance, eyes/ears/nose/throat, lymph nodes, heart, pulse, lungs, abdomen, genitourinary, skin and neurologic. Another section requires an evaluation of the musculoskeletal body parts.

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- Q.** Who is qualified to complete the form? Can Chiropractors conduct the examination?
- A.** Section 49458 of the Ed. Code says that if a district requires the evaluation, it “may be performed by a physician and surgeon or physician assistant....” Given that the California Business and Professions Code defines chiropractors as separate from physicians and surgeons, one may reasonably conclude that chiropractors are not within the group that the Ed. Code has authorized to conduct an examination. Moreover, CIF Bylaws Section 503 (G) indicate that “schools will require that a student receive an annual physical examination conducted by a *medical* practitioner certifying that the student is physically fit to participate in athletics.” Although the term medical practitioner is not defined, there is nothing to suggest that the CIF intended this to include chiropractors.