

# California Considers Permitting Students Excused Mental Health Days

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Parents, educators and clinicians are seeing an alarming increase in mental health problems among young people. Various national surveys show the rates of [depression](#), [anxiety](#), and [suicide](#) on the rise, but what to do about it is less clear.

In July of 2019, Oregon passed a bill that allows students to take excused absences for mental health related issues. [Students advocated for the bill](#), saying it would reduce stigma about mental health issues, and encourage young people to seek the treatment they need.

Now, the California legislature is considering something similar. State Senator [Anthony Portantino](#) has introduced a bill that would change the education code to allow for mental health related excused absences. For him, mental health is a personal issue.

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[Dr. Mark Reinecke](#) of the Child Mind Institute says the state needs to tread carefully with legislation like this. He understands the need for parity between mental health and physical health, but says it all depends on the specific situation.

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Reinecke says letting anxious students avoid school only reinforces the behavior. But kids aren't doomed to suffer with anxiety forever. Research has shown [Cognitive Behavioral Therapy](#) to be an effective treatment. For a student with debilitating depression, on the other hand, an excused absence to see a therapist may be very helpful.