

**Fostering Student Success**  
by  
**Preventing Brain Injury**

**A School Policy Manual for  
Safe Bicycle Riding**

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Appreciation is expressed to Carla Ainsworth, M.D., whose hard work, commitment and creativity helped launch this policy manual.

## Preface

Learning how to ride a bicycle can be one of the first exciting steps toward independence in a young child's life. Once a child has learned to ride, the bicycle becomes a source of fun and exercise around the neighborhood and a mode of transportation to the park or the home of a friend. For those students who choose to ride to and from school each day, there are many benefits. Now the family may not have to coordinate work schedules and carpool trips to take the child to and from school. Decreasing automobile use helps both the environment and reduces traffic adjacent to school grounds. Most of all, the child benefits from a fun and healthy physical activity and the independence of pedal power which can be a lifelong joy.

It is important to remember that with independence comes responsibility. Bicycle riders are expected to know and obey the "rules of the road," especially if their routes involve sharing the road with motor vehicles. Real dangers exist, and each year nearly 2,000 California children end up in hospitals with bicycle-related injuries, almost a third of which are traumatic injuries to the brain. These numbers do not include children with milder head injuries who visit emergency rooms and are sent home for "observation." There is growing concern in the medical and educational communities about the effect of milder head injuries on school performance.

This frightening statistic led California to pass a mandatory bicycle helmet law for children up to the age of 18 in 1994 (see Appendix A). California schools have the opportunity to help students stay safe by adopting a helmet use policy encouraging compliance with this law. Children can be more successful when they receive consistent messages from their parents, community and schools. Consequently schools play a key role in communicating a safety message to the youth they serve. This manual discusses these and other actions schools and school boards can take to create a bicycle-friendly environment and a safe experience for student bicycle commuters.

Our children are our most precious resource. Educating students about helmet use and providing bicycle safety education for students are two important steps toward reducing bicycle-related head injuries, disabilities and fatalities while ensuring that California's youth are safe and ready to focus on learning.

## Why The Need For Helmets?

Bicycle crashes, especially those resulting in head injuries, continue to threaten the safety of children. Nationwide, one-third of all bicyclists killed in traffic crashes in 1997 were younger than 16 years old, and this same age group accounted for 43 percent of reported bicycle-related injuries (NHTSA, 1997). The majority of bicycle deaths are the result of head injuries. Additionally, it is estimated that the cost to care for one brain-injured child over the course of his or her lifetime exceeds 4.6 million dollars. A cost that usually exhausts family resources and places a heavy burden on the public tax dollar.

Even children with a mild head injury may have difficulty with comprehension, memory and speed of thinking for the rest of their life. These learning challenges are directly linked to academic success. See Appendix B, *Mild Head Trauma* fact sheet for detailed information.

Wearing a properly fitted, safety-approved bicycle helmet can reduce head injuries by as much as 85 percent (Thompson, 1989). The morbidity and mortality associated with bicycle-related head injuries, combined with the effectiveness of helmets in preventing these injuries, has convinced many that increasing helmet use is necessary to keeping California's kids safe. The state of California affirmed the importance of bicycle helmets in 1994 with Vehicle Code 21212, requiring all children under the age of 18 to wear a properly fitted and fastened bicycle helmet when riding a bicycle.

But telling kids to wear helmets is not enough. Before conducting helmet promotions and education campaigns, different groups surveyed young people's attitudes toward helmets. Youth offered several reasons why they chose not to wear helmets:

- did not own helmets
- were not aware of the safety benefits of wearing a helmet
- did not believe they needed a helmet for the route or distance they traveled
- thought the helmet was uncomfortable or unattractive
- were concerned about the reaction of their peers – “none of my friends wear helmets” (Finch, 1996)

It is important to recognize that implementing a school helmet use policy without addressing these other concerns is not the most effective way to increase helmet use. Steps can be taken to respond to every issue:

- there are companies that sell safety-approved helmets at affordable prices. Resources are available to help organize a Bicycle Helmet Purchase Campaign to provide affordable (often less than \$7) and potentially free helmets to those in your community who cannot afford helmets.

- bicycle safety education can provide important information about the risks of riding without a helmet and other safety issues facing young riders today evidence shows no difference in the severity of injury to children whose bicycle accidents occurred in their own neighborhoods compared with children using their bicycles as a means of transportation (Agran, 1993). Bicycle riders need to wear their helmets **every time they ride**.
- an uncomfortable helmet may be due to an incorrect fit. The increase in the variety of sizes, styles and colors for helmets today provides something for almost everyone. “Wearing the Gear” is growing in popularity with the proliferation of “extreme sports.”
- negative peer attitudes toward helmets create one of the biggest challenges to increasing helmet use, especially among older children. Addressing these other concerns, rewarding individuals who wear their helmets correctly, and creating consequences for disregarding helmet legislation helps to create a positive peer pressure in support of helmet use. When more kids wear helmets, it becomes the “norm.”

All of these factors weigh on a young person’s mind as he or she chooses whether or not to wear a helmet. A multi-faceted approach to increasing bicycle safety and helmet use shows the most promise in helping young people get in the helmet habit. Schools can follow this approach to encourage safe riding behavior among their students.

## Components of a School Helmet Policy

Implementing a helmet use policy will encourage compliance with California State Law and increase safety for students riding bicycles to and from school. It will also allow schools to enforce consequences against students who repeatedly put themselves at risk. The California State School Board Association and the California State PTA support local school boards and district superintendents adopting a voluntary student bicycle safety helmet policy that will encourage students to wear helmets while riding bicycles to and from school.

We would encourage your local governing board to voluntarily adopt the following bicycle helmet use policy:

“To comply with the California Bicycle Helmet Law and reduce the number of bicycle-related head injuries, all students are required to wear a bicycle helmet while riding to and from school and when riding on school property.”

A copy of the California School Boards Association sample policy on this issue is included in Appendix C.

Bicycle helmet use policies are already in place in some California schools. The Los Angeles Unified School District developed a policy in 1996 and continues to support that policy with bicycle safety education programs in the elementary, middle and high schools. The combination of a school helmet policy with bicycle safety education reinforces the importance of wearing a helmet at all times. It will also help make bicycle riders aware of potential traffic challenges and safety concerns while riding, which may reduce injury related to rider error.

Schools can introduce the new helmet use policy through a letter to parents (see Appendix D). This is an opportunity to explain the importance of helmet use and to introduce other important bicycle safety issues. A Bicycle Safety Agreement (Appendix D) shows how the helmet is one of many steps that students, parents, and schools need to take together to increase overall safety for students.

## What Can Schools Do to Increase Bicycle Safety?

The most visible step that schools and school districts can take toward increasing bicycle safety is to adopt a bicycle helmet use policy. Even though the mandatory helmet law for California youth has been in place for several years, there is still much room for improvement in rates of helmet use. The school setting provides many additional opportunities to address bicycle safety beyond policy. What other steps can be taken to improve the health and safety of children? We can encourage the physical fitness that comes from kids riding their bikes to school while we encourage them to wear helmets. We can further protect them by providing a safe and secure environment in which to store their bicycles, and by improving traffic adjacent to the school to make it safer for kids, whether as pedestrians or bicyclists. The last step involves ensuring equipment safety so children are riding safe bicycles while wearing functional helmets.

### 1. Encourage Increased Helmet Use

It will be easier to encourage helmet use and school policy compliance if 1) children and families are educated on the hazards of riding a bicycle without a helmet; 2) helmets are made available at an affordable price; and 3) helmet use becomes common-place among young people, leading to increased positive peer pressure toward helmet use.

There are many free and low-cost educational resources available. Appendix E provides *Tips for Parents about Bicycle Helmets* and additional resources are available from organizations listed under *Resources* in Appendix H.

The California Bicycle Helmet Campaign was designed to help schools, or any other interested group, increasing helmet safety awareness and helmet use. The campaign combines bicycle safety education with helmet sales to help families equip themselves with new helmets everyone will be excited to wear. The campaign provides information on negotiating helmet deals with manufacturers to get helmets for as little as \$7 per helmet! There are also suggestions on how to obtain free or donated helmets to help families who might otherwise be unable to afford them. The California Bicycle Helmet Campaign provides a great opportunity to introduce a school's new helmet use policy together with safety education and affordable helmets. Information on obtaining the latest edition of the Campaign guide is available in Appendix H.

### 2. Implement Bicycle Safety Education and Broader Traffic Education

A study showed that bicycle helmet education in combination with helmet legislation increased helmet use more than legislation alone. It has been shown that helmet use is more likely to improve long-term if legislative changes are supplemented with education (Abularrage, 1997). Students and families need education to understand the protection that helmets can provide against serious injury. Whether as part of the California Bicycle Helmet Campaign or through other bicycle safety education resources available throughout the state, it is imperative that safety education accompany the implementation of a new helmet policy.

One program in southern California introduces bicycle safety training as a component of traffic education for children that will culminate with driver education as the students get older and gain driving privileges (Rivara, 1998). Teaching children about the hazards and challenges of traffic is important as pedestrians and bicyclists. Teaching them about automobiles is important not only because of the danger cars present to young bicyclists and children on foot, but also because they will eventually be drivers themselves. An increased awareness of the demands of sharing the road will hopefully allow them to be more aware once they are behind the wheel.

### **3. Create a Bike-friendly School Environment**

Kids are more likely to ride their bicycles to school if they believe that their bicycles are going to remain safe throughout the day. It is important to establish secure storage for bicycles on campus. Bicycle racks need to be on school property, preferably with limited access to outsiders. It is optimal to have bicycle storage that is visible from school buildings and to campus security throughout the day. Racks also need to have enough room for all bikes, to accommodate students' safety locks, and to provide reasonable access to campus buildings. Accessibility encourages students to ride their bikes because bicycle parking avoids automobile traffic and allows students to get into the building easily. Racks can even be surrounded by fencing and locked when school is in session.

Creating a bike-friendly school environment also means making sure that school traffic patterns are bicycle friendly. Because bicycle-motor vehicle collisions and motor vehicle-pedestrian collisions both contribute to childhood fatalities, "calming" traffic adjacent to schools is an important decision for keeping all children safe. For younger children this may mean separating bicycle traffic and automobile traffic completely, as well as using safety patrol officers, speed regulations, and one-way traffic patterns to minimize the volume of traffic near schools and the risk at intersections. Even when permanent modifications are not feasible, low cost safety measures 30 minutes before and after school can substantially increase safety. Older children also benefit from these traffic calming measures, but through continued traffic safety education and increasing cognitive ability they may have more opportunity to respond to challenging traffic situations. California's Safe Routes to School program provides materials to help plan and implement these safety measures (See Appendix G).

### **4. Support Well-maintained Bicycles and Helmets**

Whether as part of an annual bicycle helmet campaign or continuing bicycle safety helmet education, it is vital that bicycles and helmets be inspected periodically to confirm that they are in good working condition. A helmet that has been in a crash or otherwise damaged may not provide adequate protection in the case of another crash. Many companies have policies about exchanging helmets that have been damaged in a crash to ensure that riders do not continue to wear helmets that might be unsafe. If a child is in a crash that damages the helmet, the helmet should be replaced immediately. The damaged helmet should be cut into pieces and thrown away. This will prevent someone from using the helmet and thinking that it is safe.

Bicycle and helmet inspection can become part of an annual bicycle helmet campaign. Kids should be taught how to inspect their bicycles to make sure they are functioning correctly as part of the bicycle safety education curriculum. As we teach children about the challenges of negotiating with other bicycles and traffic, it is important that their bicycles are prepared to respond as well.

A bicycle rodeo is a wonderful opportunity to incorporate many of these factors. The “Bike Days!” manual (See Appendix H) developed by the Contra Costa County Health Services Department Prevention Program, explains the steps necessary to organize a rodeo. Some include a helmet give-away or the chance to buy helmets at a reduced price. If not, this can easily be coordinated with the California Bicycle Helmet Campaign. Traffic education is the focus of the actual rodeo course, while a bicycle maintenance and helmet check stations make sure that every young person who attends the rodeo leaves with properly functioning and safe equipment.

## **Bicycle Helmet Standards**

Bicycle Helmet Standards have changed. The federal Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has established minimum standards for bicycle helmets. Helmets made or sold in the United States after March 10, 1999 must meet this standard. A sticker inside the helmet tells what standard the helmet meets. These helmets are certified to meet a minimum standard for impact and strap integrity. The CPSC standard covers only bicycle helmets.

Helmets on the market that look like bicycle helmets that don't meet the CPSC standard just omit any reference to bicycling on the labeling. Consequently, they can be used when skating, skateboarding, or using non-motorized scooters and not be in violation of the CPSC minimum standard as long as they are not labeled "for bicycling." But consumers need to beware! These helmets can be sold in bicycle shops and stores on the same shelf as approved bicycle helmets, so consumer awareness is required to avoid purchasing a helmet that fails to meet the minimum standards for impact and strap integrity.

When the CPSC establishes a standard for a product, it creates a mechanism whereby substandard products can be seized and importers and retailers fined for violations. Until such time as the CPSC creates standards for scooters, skateboard and in-line skate helmets, medical and engineering experts recommend that consumers select helmets for those sports that meet the bicycle helmet standard. This does not mean that a helmet must "look" like a bicycle helmet, just meet the minimum impact and strap standard. Helmets approved for cycling by the CPSC may look like the popular extreme sports boarding helmets.

## **Scooters, Skates and Skateboards**

With the reemergence of scooters and the growing popularity of skateboards, skates and the “extreme sports” phenomenon, schools may also choose to include requirements for helmets for these forms of transportation and recreation in their school policies.

Injury to the head while skating, skateboarding and using non-motorized scooters can cause injury, disability and death similar to that caused by cycling. Consequently, medical and engineering experts recommend that until standards are established for helmets used in these activities, the minimum CPSC bicycle helmet standard be applied to all helmets used in these activities.

We would encourage your local governing board to voluntarily include the following language in a helmet use policy:

“To comply with the California Bicycle Helmet Law and reduce the number of bicycle-related head injuries, all students are required to wear a bicycle helmet while riding to and from school and when riding on school property. Because of the similar risk of injury this policy also requires a Consumer Product Safety Commission approved bicycle helmet be worn when using scooters, skates and skateboards in a like manner.”

## **Conclusion**

Throughout California, individuals and groups face different obstacles to safe bicycle riding both on the road and in their community's attitudes and perceptions. Most likely someone else has faced this challenge, so it is important to take advantage of the efforts of the many organizations working to improve bicycle safety. Community volunteers, law enforcement personnel, insurance companies, youth serving agencies, health educators, bicycle advocates, and helmet manufacturers are working to make helmets the "norm" instead of the exception in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We should continue to encourage bicycle riding among California's youth as both a great form of exercise and a useful mode of transportation. More importantly, it is an opportunity for kids to get outside and have fun. It is exciting for children to enjoy the freedom of bicycle riding, but it is our responsibility to provide appropriate education and safety resources to prevent the fun from being spoiled by an injury, disability, or death that could have been prevented.

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## **Appendices**

- A. California Bicycle Helmet Law
- B. Mild Head Trauma Fact Sheet
- C. California School Board Association Sample Policy
- D. Sample Letter To Parents Introducing Policy
- E. Bicycle Safety Agreement
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## Appendix A

### California Bicycle Helmet Law

**Assembly Bill No. 2268**

**CHAPTER 1000**

An act to amend Section 21204 of, and to add Section 21212 to, the Vehicle Code, relating to Vehicles.

[ Approved by Governor October 9, 1993. Filed with Secretary of State October 11, 1993.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2268, Caldera. Bicycles: safety helmets.

(1) Existing law prohibits a person operating a bicycle upon a highway from allowing a person who is 4 years of age or younger, or weighs 40 pounds or less, to ride as a passenger on a bicycle unless that passenger is wearing a helmet meeting specified standards.

This bill would, instead, prohibit a person under 18 years of age from operating, or riding upon a bicycle as a passenger, upon a street, bikeway, or other public bicycle path or trail unless the person is wearing a helmet meeting specified standards. The bill, commencing in 1995, would provide for fines to be imposed for violations of this prohibition and would require all the revenue derived from the fines to be allocated, as specified. The bill would, however, require that the charge against a person be dismissed if it is the first charge against that person for a violation of this prohibition.

The bill would require any safety helmet sold or offered for sale to be conspicuously labeled in accordance with the specified standards and would prohibit the sale or offer for sale of any bicycle safety helmet which is not of a type meeting the safety standards.

Since under other provisions of existing law, violation of the prohibitions and requirements imposed by this bill would be infractions, this bill would create new crimes, thereby imposing a state-mandated local program.

(2) The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

SECTION 1. Section 21204 of the Vehicle Code is amended to read:

21204. (a) No person operating a bicycle upon a highway shall ride other than upon or astride a permanent and regular seat attached thereto.

(b) No operator shall allow a person riding as a passenger, and no person shall ride as a passenger, on a bicycle upon a highway other than upon or astride a separate seat attached thereto. If the passenger is four years of age or younger, or weighs 40 pounds or less, the seat shall have adequate provision for retaining the passenger in place and for protecting the passenger from the moving parts of the bicycle.

SECTION 2. Section 21212 is added to the Vehicle Code, to read:

21212. (a) A person under 18 years of age shall not operate a bicycle, or ride upon a bicycle as a passenger, upon a street, bikeway, as defined in subdivision (a) of Section 2373 of the Streets and Highways Code, or any other public bicycle path or trail unless that person is wearing a properly fitted and fastened bicycle helmet that meets the standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI Z 90.4 bicycle helmet standard) or the Snell Memorial Foundation's Standard for Protective Headgear for Use in Bicycling. This requirement also applies to a person who rides upon a bicycle while in a restraining seat that is attached to the bicycle or in a trailer towed by the bicycle.

(b) Any helmet sold or offered for sale for use by operators and passengers of bicycles shall be conspicuously labeled in accordance with the standard described in subdivision (a) which shall constitute the manufacturer's certification that the helmet conforms to the applicable safety standards.

(c) No person shall sell, or offer for sale, for use by an operator or passenger of a bicycle any safety helmet which is not of a type meeting requirements established by this section.

(d) (1) A person who violates a requirement of this section in 1994 shall be warned of the violation by the enforcing official, but shall not be issued a notice to appear.

(2) Any charge under this subdivision shall be dismissed when the person charged alleges in court, under oath, that the charge against the person is the first charge against that person under this subdivision, unless it is otherwise established in court that the charge is not the first charge against the person.

(e) Except as provided in subdivision (d), a violation of this section is an infraction punishable by a fine of not more than twenty-five dollars (\$25).

The parent or legal guardian having control or custody of an unemancipated minor whose conduct violates this section shall be jointly and severally liable with the minor for the amount of the fine imposed pursuant to this subdivision.

(f) Notwithstanding Section 1463 of the Penal Code or any other provision of law, the fines collected for a violation of this section shall be allocated as follows:

(1) Seventy-two and one-half percent of the amount collected shall be deposited in a special account of the county health department, to be used for bicycle safety education and for assisting low-income families in obtaining approved bicycle helmets for children under the age of 18 years, either on a loan or purchase basis. The county may contract for the implementation of this program, which, to the extent practicable, shall be operated in conjunction with the child passenger restraint program pursuant to Section 27360.

(2) Two and one-half percent of the amount collected shall be deposited in the county treasury to be used by the county to administer the program described in paragraph (1).

(3) If the violation occurred within a city, 25 percent of the amount collected shall be transferred to and deposited in the treasury of that city. If the violation occurred in an unincorporated area, this 25 percent shall be deposited and used pursuant to paragraph (1).

SECTION 3. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because the only costs which may be incurred by a local agency or school district will be incurred because this act creates a new crime or infraction, changes the definition of a crime or infraction, changes the penalty for a crime or infraction, or eliminates a crime or infraction. Notwithstanding Section 17580 of the Government Code, unless otherwise specified in this act, the provisions of this act shall become operative on the same date that the act takes effect pursuant to the California Constitution.

## Appendix B

### MILD HEAD TRAUMA “A little head injury can mean a lot!”

Much attention has been focused on severe, traumatic brain injuries and their impact on youth. But 90% of the new cases of medically diagnosed head injuries each year are mild head injuries (MHI). Most often these are the children sent home from the Emergency Department to be “observed” by their parents. These injuries affect at least 375,000 children in the U.S. each year. (Aitken, 1998) Though the patients may not show immediate signs of neurological problems or need to be hospitalized, the effects of MHI can be significant and sustained.

#### **Symptoms and consequences:**

- Children with a brain injury who are classified medically as having a “good outcome” often still have significant functional brain deficits. Normal development and maturation processes may be affected. (Koelfen, 1997)
- Children with MHI have as many behavior problems one year after the injury as children with severe head injuries. (Asarnov, 1991; Rivara, 1994)
- Some patients with MHI suffer structural cerebral damage, detectable by CT scan. (Tellier, 1999)
- Symptoms of MHI can occur weeks or months after the initial injury. (Beers, 1992)
- Children may have persisting symptoms after a concussion including headache, dizziness, increased irritability, inability to concentrate, and reduced memory, all part of the “post-concussive syndrome.” (Lundar, 1985)
- Repeated MHI occurring within a short period, from hours to weeks, can be catastrophic or even fatal, this phenomenon is called “second impact syndrome.” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1997)

#### **Specific effects on learning:**

- A study of children with traumatic brain injuries found that children with average achievement scores two years after the injury often failed a grade and/or required special educational support. (Ewing-Cobbs, 1998)
- While not apparent immediately after injury, preschool children with MHI had difficulty reading their first year of school and difficulty with visual puzzles six and 12 months after the injury. (Wrightson, 1995)
- Adolescents with MHI may have trouble with verbal learning, abstraction, and reasoning. (Spear-Bassett, 1990)
- Reduced or lost interest in reading. (Nemeth, 1996)
- Developing cognitive abilities in young children may be more vulnerable to the effects of head injuries. (Satz, 1997)
- Deficits in verbal learning and memory vary qualitatively according to severity. (Yeates, 1995)
- Standard measures of intellectual function (such as the WAIS) may not detect important deficits in attention, problem solving, and verbal learning seen in some MHI patients. (McAllister, 1992)

Mild head injuries can have a significant and sustained impact on children and adolescents’ ability to learn. We must do more to educate young people, parents and teachers about the effects of MHI and the ability to prevent many of these injuries by wearing helmets.

## Appendix C

### Sample Letter to Parents Introducing Policy <sup>1</sup>

Dear Parents/Guardians:

To ensure the well-being of all of our children, we are informing you of our policy on bicycle safety. It is imperative that all children are aware of the rules, regulations, responsibilities and dangers of riding bicycles. These teachings must come from both the home and the school. It is our hope that by working together we will help our young people attain the knowledge necessary to ride safely.

Effective immediately, it is the policy of (Name of School) that all students riding bicycles to and from school MUST wear bicycle helmets. This is a state law, as well as a school rule. These helmets may not be held in the hands of students or carried on handlebars; **THEY MUST BE WORN**. Any child who enters the school campus without a helmet on his/her head will have his/her bicycle confiscated immediately. The bicycle will not be released until a parent or guardian comes to campus to retrieve it or the child has a helmet.

Enclosed please find a Bicycle Safety Agreement. If your child rides a bicycle to school, the agreement must be signed by you and your child and returned to the Main Office as soon as possible. If the agreement is not kept, the student will not be allowed to ride his/her bicycle to school.

We ask that you also discuss general traffic safety with your child. Some of the things that we feel are important are:

- 1) cross the street only where there is a crosswalk;
- 2) when crossing at a stop signal and the light turns green, always wait and make sure there are no cars running the red light before beginning to cross;
- 3) do not ride double on bicycles – this is extremely dangerous and against the law;
- 4) keep bicycles in good repair.

Our students are of vital importance to us all. Please help us in educating your child in bicycle and traffic safety so we may ensure the safety of all.

Sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> \*adapted from Los Angeles Unified School District parent letter, 1996

## Appendix D

# California School Board Association Sample Board Policy

**Students**

**BP 5142.3**

## STUDENT USE OF BICYCLES

Note: Vehicle code 21212, added by AB 2268 (Ch. 1000, Statutes of 1993), prohibits anyone under 18 years of age from operating or riding on a bicycle as a passenger on a street, bikeway or other public bicycle trail without wearing a helmet that meets specified standards. The new statute does not give the schools any specific obligation to enforce this requirement, and the following optional policy may be revised as desired.

The Governing Board recognizes that bicycle helmets lessen the seriousness of head injuries. The Board expects that students who ride bicycles to and from school will consistently wear bicycle helmets, observe safety laws and rules, and display courtesy toward other riders and pedestrians.

Health and safety instruction and student handbooks shall include information related to state law that requires all minors to wear a properly fitted and fastened bicycle helmet when riding a bicycle on streets or public bicycle paths. The district will cooperate with community groups that provide bicycle safety information to students.

Students are encouraged to use bicycle locks. The district will not be responsible for bicycles which are lost, stolen, or damaged.

Note: Fines for violating Vehicle Code 21212 will be levied starting in 1995, and over 70% of the amount collected is to be deposited in a county health department account to be used for bicycle safety education and for helping low-income families obtain helmets for their children.

### *Legal Reference*

#### EDUCATION CODE

*44808 Exemption from liability when students are not on school property*

*51202 Instruction in personal and public health and safety*

#### VEHICLE CODE

*21212 Bicycle helmets*

## **Appendix E**

### **Bicycle Safety Agreement**

*(Printed on School Letterhead)*

#### **Student**

I understand that wearing my helmet can protect me from injury if I hit my head.

I understand that I am to wear my helmet when traveling to and from school and when riding on school property.

I understand that I need to wear my helmet in the correct position and properly buckled for it to fit correctly and protect my head.

---

*Student Signature*

#### **Parent/Guardian**

I understand that by wearing a helmet, my child may be protected from injury, disability and death if he/she hits his/her head.

I understand the school helmet use policy and will require my child to wear a helmet when traveling to and from school and when riding on school property.

I understand that my child needs to wear his/her helmet in the correct position and properly buckled for it to fit correctly and protect his/her head.

I will provide a helmet for my child.

---

*Parent/Guardian Signature*

## **Appendix F**

### **TIPS FOR PARENTS about BICYCLE HELMETS**

#### **Why should my child wear a helmet?**

- ! A properly fitted bicycle helmet protects your child's head when a fall occurs. Helmets, when worn properly, are 85% effective in preventing traumatic brain injury.
- ! Even when parents and children work hard to be safe, others are not so careful. How often have you said, "Look at that idiot!" when observing a driver on your street? Most children are injured, disabled, or killed in their own neighborhoods.
- ! Even moderate brain injury can result in problems with comprehension, memory and speed of thinking.

#### **What does proper fit mean?**

- ! Proper fit means that the helmet covers the forehead and the straps are adjusted so that the helmet does not slip around.
- ! It can take 5-15 minutes to properly fit a helmet. It is best to do this during a quiet time, rather than when the child is about to ride. During the commercials of the favorite family television show may be a good time.
- ! If the slide that adjusts just below the ear slips out of place the helmet may not protect the head in a crash. If the slide does not have a "lock" feature, it can be secured by 3-4 stitches with a needle and thread. Place the stitches below the slide to prevent it from slipping.
- ! Check your child's helmet once a month for proper fit and damage. Dents and cracks may prevent the helmet from doing its job the next time it is needed! If your child has grown, the stitches holding the slide in place may need to be moved.
- ! If your child is in a crash that damages the helmet, replace the helmet immediately. Cut the helmet into pieces and throw it away. This will prevent someone from using the helmet and thinking that it is safe.

#### **Encouraging your child to be safe**

- ! One of the most important things a parent can do to make sure their child is safe, is to practice the safe behavior. Adults should always wear their helmets when they ride! Make it a family rule!
- ! Your child can demonstrate responsible behavior by wearing a helmet every time he or she rides a bike. Learning to be responsible when biking can help your child learn other skills--like safely driving a car.

- ! Put a picture of a properly fitted helmet and a mirror near where your children put on their helmets. Teach them how to check their helmet.

## **Appendix G**

### **Safe Routes to School<sup>1</sup>**

Remember when children walked and rode bicycles everywhere—to school, their friends’ houses, the park or the store—and parents seldom feared for their safety?

Being active and exploring their surroundings comes naturally to children. Unfortunately, young people today are not as free to walk and play outdoors because our neighborhoods are no longer kid-friendly. Many of our communities have been designed to be convenient for cars, not for children. Parents have also become concerned about violence and predators.

On the other hand, health professionals are concerned about the resulting decline in physical activity and its effect on students, especially as children have been drawn to television, video games and computers. Physical activity is an important cornerstone of lifelong health. Children who are physically active are more alert which helps them do better in school. Physical activity helps improve the self-image and independence of children and contributes to their healthy social and emotional development.

Safe Routes to School programs provides opportunities for parents, schools, law enforcement, health departments and communities to come together to address these issues by getting children to walk and bicycle to and from school in groups accompanied by adults when possible. These efforts include a range of activities that are selected to meet local needs. They may include:

- “Walk Your Child To School Day” events  
(Nationally, the official day is the first Wednesday of October)
- Mobilizing parent/grandparent volunteers, block parents, “walking school buses”
- Neighborhood mapping and safety surveys
- Identifying any hazards on roads and sidewalks
- Promoting enforcement of traffic laws
- Educating community leaders, parents and children
- Implementing “traffic calming” strategies and prioritizing street repairs to make neighborhoods safer for walking and biking
- ....And many more creative and innovative strategies

For more information, contact:

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<sup>1</sup>Adapted from *Kids Walk-to School: A Guide to Promote Walking to School* by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease

Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity. Contact at [www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidswalk.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidswalk.htm)

## Appendix H

### Resources

#### Materials

***Bike Days! A "How-to" Guide for Conducting a Comprehensive Bicycle Safety Event.*** Developed by the Right Rider! Project, California Bicycle Safety Network, and the Contra Costa County Health Services Department Prevention Program. Request a copy from [vfoster@dhs.ca.gov](mailto:vfoster@dhs.ca.gov).

***California Bicycle Helmet Campaign Manual*** explains how to conduct a bulk purchase program for a local school or community organization. Information is also provided on how to provide helmets to low-income children. Originally developed by the Maternal and Child Health Branch of the California Department of Health Services and the California State PTA, it has recently been updated by the State and Local Injury Control Section of the California Department of Health Services. Request a copy from [vfoster@dhs.ca.gov](mailto:vfoster@dhs.ca.gov).

***Kids Walk-to School: A Guide to Promote Walking to School*** by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity. Contact [www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidswalk.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidswalk.htm)

#### Agencies and Organizations

Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute  
4611 Seventh Street S  
Arlington, VA 22204-1419  
(703) 486-0100 [www.helmets.org](http://www.helmets.org)  
Clearinghouse and technical resource on  
bicycle helmets.

California Department of Health Services  
Bicycle Head Injury Prevention Program  
611 North Seventh Street, Suite C  
Sacramento, CA 95814-0208  
(916) 324-3286 [www.dhs.ca.gov/epic](http://www.dhs.ca.gov/epic)

National Center for Bicycling and Walking  
1506 21<sup>st</sup> Street NW, Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20036  
(202) 463-6622 [www.bikewalk.org](http://www.bikewalk.org)  
Works with transportation, recreation and  
public health professionals to create more  
bicycle-friendly and walkable communities.  
Organizes ProBike/ProWalk conference  
every two years.

National Safe Kids Coalition  
1301 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Suite 1000  
Washington, DC 20004-1707  
(202) 662-0600 [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org)  
Educates adults and children, provides safety  
devices to families in need, and passes and  
strengthens laws to protect children ages 14  
and under.

Snell Memorial Foundation  
3628 Madison Avenue, Suite 11  
North Highlands, CA 95660  
(916) 331-5073 [www.smf.org](http://www.smf.org)  
A not-for-profit organization dedicated to  
research, education, testing and development  
of helmet safety standards.