
SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Senator Jesse Arreguín, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AB 1549 **Hearing Date:** June 9, 2026
Author: Krell
Version: January 7, 2026
Urgency: Yes **Fiscal:** No
Consultant: ML

Subject: *Alternative domestic violence program*

HISTORY

Source: California District Attorneys Association
California State Association of Counties
Chief Probation Officers' of California

Prior Legislation: AB 374 (Holden), vetoed, 2023
AB 479 (Blanca Rubio), Ch. 89, Stats. of 2023
AB 372 (Stone), Ch. 290, Stats. of 2018

Support: Arcadia Police Officers' Association; Brea Police Association; Burbank Police Officers' Association; California Association of School Police Chiefs; California Coalition of School Safety Professionals; California Narcotic Officers' Association; California Reserve Peace Officers Association; Claremont Police Officers Association; Corona Police Officers Association; County of Santa Barbara; County of Santa Clara; Culver City Police Officers' Association; Fullerton Police Officers' Association; Los Angeles School Police Management Association; Los Angeles School Police Officers Association; Murrieta Police Officers' Association; Newport Beach Police Association; Palos Verdes Police Officers Association; Placer County Deputy Sheriffs' Association; Pomona Police Officers' Association; Riverside Police Officers Association; Riverside Sheriffs' Association; Smart Justice California

Opposition: None known

Assembly Floor Vote: 75 - 0

PURPOSE

The purpose of this bill is to extend the sunset date of the pilot program authorizing specified counties to offer an alternative batterer's intervention program (BIP) to individuals convicted of domestic violence and to add Sacramento County as one of the authorized counties that can participate in the pilot program.

Existing law states that a person who willfully inflicts corporal injury resulting in a traumatic condition upon the offender's spouse or former spouse, cohabitant or former cohabitant, fiancé, someone with whom the offender has, or previously had, a dating relationship, or the mother or

father of the offender's child, is guilty of a felony punishable by imprisonment in the state prison for two, three, or four years, or in a county jail for no longer than one year, or a fine up to \$6,000 or by both fine and imprisonment. (Pen. Code, § 273.5, subds. (a), (b).)

Existing law requires a defendant who receives probation for a domestic violence offense to successfully complete a batterer's intervention program lasting for a period not less than one year with periodic progress reports by the program to the court every three months or less and weekly sessions of a minimum of two hours class time. (Pen. Code, § 1203.097, subd. (a)(6).)

Existing law requires a defendant to attend consecutive weekly sessions, unless granted an excused absence for good cause by the program for no more than three individual sessions during the entire program, and to complete the program within 18 months. (Pen. Code, § 1203.097, subd. (a)(6).)

Existing law requires that approved programs be designed to stop domestic violence and include, among other things, structured group sessions focused on offender accountability, education regarding the dynamics and impacts of abuse, victim notification procedures, and regular reporting to the court and probation department, among other required components. (Pen. Code, § 1203.097, subd. (c).)

Existing law requires a defendant convicted of an offense against any of the following persons to complete a batterer's intervention program: a spouse or former spouse, a cohabitant or former cohabitant, a person the offender was in a dating or engagement relationship with, the mother or father of the offender's child, the child, or any person related to the offender by blood or marriage in the first or second degree. (Fam. Code, § 6211.)

Existing law authorizes the Counties of Napa, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and Yolo to offer a program for individuals convicted of domestic violence that does not comply with the components of the batterer's program otherwise outlined in state law, if the program meets certain requirements. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (a).)

Existing law requires the counties above to develop the program in consultation with the domestic violence service providers and other relevant community partners. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (a)(1).)

Existing law requires the counties above to perform a risk and needs assessment utilizing an assessment demonstrated to be appropriate for domestic violence offenders for each offender entering the program. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (a)(2).)

Existing law requires that the offender's treatment within the program be based on the findings of the risk and needs assessment. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (a)(3).)

Existing law requires the program to include components that are evidence-based or promising practices. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (a)(4).)

Existing law requires the program to have a comprehensive written curriculum that informs the operations of the program and outlines the treatment and intervention modalities. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (a)(5).)

Existing law requires the offender's treatment within the program to be not less than one year in length, unless an alternative length is established by a validated risk and needs assessment completed by the probation department or an organization approved by the probation department. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (a)(6).)

Existing law requires the counties to collect data on participants in the program, as specified. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (a)(7).)

Existing law requires the counties to report all of the following information annually to the Legislature:

- The risk and needs assessment tool used for the program;
- The curriculum used by each program;
- The number of participants with a program length other than one year, and the alternative program lengths used;
- Individual data on the number of offenders participating in the program; and,
- Other individual data that the county is required by law to collect, as specified. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (a)(8)(A)-(E).)

Existing law defines “evidence-based program or practice” as a program or practice that has a high level of research indicating its effectiveness, determined as a result of multiple rigorous evaluations including randomized controlled trials and evaluations that incorporate strong comparison group designs, or a single large multisite randomized study, and, typically, has specified procedures that allow for successful replication. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (c)(1).)

Existing law defines “promising program or practice” as a program or practice that has some research demonstrating its effectiveness but does not meet the full criteria for an evidence-based designation. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (c)(2).)

Existing law provides that the law authorizing the named counties to operate alternative batterer's programs sunsets on July 1, 2026. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (f).)

This bill extends the sunset date of the pilot program authorizing specified counties to offer an alternative batterer's intervention program to July 1, 2030.

This bill adds Sacramento County as one of the authorized counties that can participate in the pilot program.

COMMENTS

1. Need for This Bill

The author writes:

AB 1549 is a step toward breaking the cycles of abuse that all too often entrap victims for months or years. More than two decades ago, the state made completion of a Batterers Intervention Program (BIP) mandatory for all domestic

violence offenders sentenced to probation – an important step to help prevent repeated abuse.

Since then, multiple reports have documented serious shortcomings in the state's BIPs, including high absentee and dropout rates among offenders. This is driven in no small part by an outdated curriculum that fails to take advantage of modern best practices. A May 2025 grand jury report highlighted specific, urgent shortcomings in Sacramento County's BIP.

AB 1549 will allow selected counties to continue to study promising improvements to BIPs by extending the sunset date of an existing pilot program until July 2030. At the same time, it proposes a measured expansion of the pilot into Sacramento County, where stakeholders have asked for flexibility to make much-needed changes to the way BIPs operate here.

2. Existing Law Governing Batterer's Programs

In California, it is a felony to willfully inflict a physical injury that results in a traumatic condition on an intimate partner, including a spouse, former spouse, a current or previous cohabitant, a person the offender was in a dating or engagement relationship with, or the mother or father of the offender's child. (Pen. Code, § 273.5, subds. (a), (b).)

When a person is convicted of a domestic violence offense and granted probation, state law requires the court to impose specific mandatory conditions. One of those conditions is participation in a BIP. (Pen. Code, § 1203.097, subd. (a).) A BIP is a court-ordered counseling and educational program for individuals convicted of domestic violence offenses. State law sets minimum requirements for BIPs. (Pen. Code, § 1203.097, subd. (c).) Offenders who receive probation must complete at least one year in a BIP and participate in weekly group sessions. (Pen. Code, § 1203.097, subd. (a)(6).) BIPs must include content designed to promote accountability for abusive behavior, educate participants about the impact of domestic violence on victims and children, and encourage the development of nonviolent relationship skills. (Pen. Code, § 1203.097, subd. (c)(1)(F).) BIPs are required to provide regular progress reports to the court and probation department on the participant's progress in the program. (Pen. Code, § 1203.097, subd. (c)(1)(O).) County probation departments are responsible for approving and monitoring these programs to ensure compliance with statutory standards. (Pen. Code, § 1203.097, subd. (c)(5).)

Existing law allows selected counties to provide alternative BIPs in place of the existing BIPs counties are required to offer. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (a).) Alternative BIPs allow the county more flexibility to update program design elements, including curriculum and program length, while not constrained by the standards in existing law. (*Ibid.*) If an individual who is convicted of domestic violence receives probation and is located within a participating county, that individual can be enrolled in an alternative BIP, likely with an updated program design, and upon completion will be deemed to have met the existing batterer's program requirements. (Pen. Code, § 1203.099, subd. (b).)

3. Efficacy of Batterer's Programs

In October 2022, the California State Auditor issued an audit of the state's existing BIPs. The Auditor examined the administration and oversight by the probation departments and courts in

five counties—Alameda, Contra Costa, Del Norte, Los Angeles, and San Joaquin. The Auditor found that persons convicted of domestic violence who completed a BIP recidivated in 20 percent of cases. (Cal. State Auditor, *Batterer Intervention Programs: State Guidance and Oversight Are Needed to Effectively Reduce Domestic Violence*, Rep. No. 2021-113 (Oct. 2022) <<https://information.auditor.ca.gov/pdfs/reports/2021-113.pdf>> [as of May 28, 2026].) However, nearly 50 percent of program participants reviewed by the Auditor did not complete the program, and 65 percent of those participants later reoffended. (*Ibid.*) The State Auditor found “probation departments did not consistently assess all offenders for underlying issues, such as mental health or substance abuse concerns, that might interfere with an offender’s ability to complete a program.” (*Ibid.* at p. 2.) The auditor also reported that “probation departments, program providers, and courts generally did not hold many of the offenders we reviewed accountable for probation and program violations.” (*Ibid.*) “Program providers did not supervise offenders appropriately or report required information.” (*Ibid.*)

AB 372 (Stone), Chapter 290, Statutes of 2018, authorized the Counties of Napa, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and Yolo to offer an alternative BIP for individuals convicted of domestic violence that does not need to comply with existing requirements for batterer’s programs. These alternative BIPs have been used by counties to update program design elements including curriculum, program length, risk assessment factors, oversight, and other program design considerations.

Each year, the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) is required to submit an annual report to the Legislature assessing the effectiveness of the pilot program, and reporting on specified data. The most recent report states:

Five years into the AB 372 Pilot and across six counties, more than 6,900 people have entered the program. For those who entered the program in the fourth year, half (50%) had shown a positive completion of the program. One in six had a negative completion (16%) and over one third (34%) had a neutral, pending, or unknown completion status. (CSAC, *AB 372 Year 5 Legislative Report* (Sept. 2025) <<https://www.counties.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/AB372-Year-5-Legislative-Report.pdf>> [as of May 28, 2026].)

However, it is still unclear whether program completion rates are generally stronger for the alternative BIPs when compared to the existing BIPs in other counties. Due to data limitations surrounding recidivism measurement time, recidivism rates for individual counties are not presented in the report. (*Id.* at pp. 15-16.)

4. Sacramento County’s Batterer’s Program

A recent Sacramento County Grand Jury report identified concerns with the existing BIPs in the county, regarding completion rates, data collection, provider oversight, and the absence of validated risk assessment tools. The grand jury report states that “the program in Sacramento County has had virtually no change in treatment intervention (method, curriculum, and philosophy/approach) since its inception, and there is no standardized assessment tool to determine the offender’s risk for reoffending at the completion of the program.” (Sacramento County Grand Jury, *Adding Insult to Injury: The Systematic Failure of the Sacramento County Batterer’s Treatment Program* (2024-2025 Rep.) <<https://sacgrandjury.org/docs/reports/24-25/gj-batterers-treatment-program.pdf>> [as of May 28, 2026].) “Probation estimates that the [program] failure rate could be as high as 95%.” (*Ibid.*) The report notes that the program is

ineffective in part because offenders must pay for the program and because the program is retributive, rather than rehabilitative. (*Ibid.*)

5. Effect of This Bill

This bill extends the sunset date of the pilot program authorizing specified counties to offer an alternative BIP from July 1, 2026 to July 1, 2030. The bill also adds Sacramento County as one of the authorized counties that can participate in the pilot program, due to concerns that the existing program in Sacramento is not achieving its goals.

6. Argument in Support

The Chief Probation Officers of California write:

To date, the work under AB 372 has led to local batterer intervention program modifications, curriculum advancements, briefs on California's domestic violence system, recidivism research, and annual reporting. After the first five years of implementation, over 6,900 individuals have entered programs across the six counties. While progress has been made in this area, there remains work to be done to expand evidence-based practices that will change thinking patterns, reduce anti-social behavior, and better understand the complex relationship between the risk of reoffending and treatment needs.

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