



## 2025 – 2026 Legislative Platform

The purpose of the California Association of School Psychologists (CASP) is to empower school psychologists to strengthen educational systems and the people they serve. It is the mission of CASP to foster the wellbeing of the children, schools, and communities throughout California. The following legislative priorities have been established to further the CASP mission in the 2025 – 2026 legislative session.

### **Ensure adequate funding for TK-12 education, special education and related services, and evidence-based interventions that prepare students for their own path in life including college and career readiness.**

High expectations, academic rigor, and supportive school environments depend on adequate funding for public school programs and qualified personnel to meet students' diverse needs, including those with special challenges. CASP advocates for maintaining separate special education funding, ensuring it is not merged into the Local Control Funding Formula, while supporting the Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAP) to address factors that promote learning and development. CASP also supports expanding access to federal funds through Medi-Cal programs and Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) benefits and emphasizes that funding for new behavioral health roles through the soon-to-be-implemented All-Payer Fee Schedule, must not detract from existing positions. Commitment to these priorities ensures students are prepared for college, careers, and life.

### **Achieve equity and access to high quality educational programs for all students; reduce disproportionality in discipline practices and special education identification and placement.**

CASP is deeply committed to promoting equity in education and ensuring fair opportunities for all students. CASP strongly advocates for equitable discipline practices in schools to address the disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates among minority youth. Research-backed frameworks such as Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and restorative practices have proven effective in improving student behavior, reducing disciplinary incidents, and fostering respectful, inclusive school climates. These approaches provide a sustainable framework for achieving positive academic and behavioral outcomes for all students.

CASP also seeks to address the overrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education programs, often due to inequitable resource allocation and barriers such as geographic and economic disparities. These challenges disproportionately affect English Language Learners and students of color, limiting their access to high-quality education and support. CASP encourages the State fund measures to improve access to an academically rigorous education and social-emotional support for students in high-poverty schools. School psychologists in California are also concerned about the inequitable access to comprehensive and research-based assessment processes for African American students referred for special education evaluation. CASP advocates for culturally competent training for school psychologists, equitable access to rigorous education, and the use of validated, research-based assessment practices to ensure fair and accurate evaluations for all students. These efforts aim to eliminate systemic inequities and support success for every learner.

**Ensure the provision of comprehensive psychoeducational, social-emotional, and mental health services in schools. Ensure that these services, which address students' academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs, are delivered by qualified school-based professionals.**

Twenty percent of school-age youth experience mental health disorders during their K-12 education, yet less than one percent receive special education services under Emotional Disability, highlighting a critical need for school-based behavioral health supports. Teen suicides in California have risen sharply, with a 34% increase among youth aged 15-19 over three years, exacerbated by the pandemic, racial injustice, student privacy rights, and economic instability. School psychologists play a vital role in fostering safe, supportive environments through prevention, early intervention, crisis counseling, and collaboration with families and communities. Policymakers must ensure funding and resources for multi-tiered support systems (MTSS), including social-emotional learning, restorative practices, and trauma-informed care, while supporting professional development for school psychologists to address student mental health effectively. Students thrive academically and emotionally when schools prioritize both their cognitive and social-emotional needs.

**Support and advance school policies, practices, and environments that protect and uphold the rights of all students, with a focus on those from, or belonging to, vulnerable and marginalized communities and cultures.**

Research from the CDC and California Healthy Kids Survey highlights the significant challenges faced by vulnerable and marginalized students, including those from racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ youth, students with disabilities, and those experiencing poverty. These students disproportionately experience bullying, discrimination, and mental health challenges, which negatively impact their well-being and academic success. Current political efforts to restrict discussions of race, gender identity, and immigrant rights further threaten their civil liberties and exacerbate feelings of exclusion. Schools have a responsibility to adopt inclusive policies and practices, such as culturally responsive teaching and affirming environments, which research shows can improve outcomes for these students and foster safer, more equitable school communities.

**Ensure equitable school safety and crisis management practices that are informed by research and rooted in psychological safety.**

Threats to student and staff safety in schools across the nation point to the continued need for policies and actions that promote positive and safe school climates and social emotional wellbeing for all students. Every student deserves a safe school in which to learn. School district personnel are more aware than ever of the need to maintain a safe environment that is conducive to learning.

School psychologists play a vital role in creating safe, supportive learning environments by promoting respectful relationships, student engagement, and comprehensive safety measures, including physical security and crisis response. CASP advocates for expanding access to school-based mental health support by increasing staffing of school-employed mental health professionals and integrating prevention and intervention services. Policymakers must invest in programs that prioritize positive school climates, crisis preparedness, and equitable, multidisciplinary threat assessment teams to ensure safety and success for all students.

**Reduce the shortage of school psychologists by increasing school psychology graduate programs and reducing barriers to Out of State School Psychology Interns.**

California faces a critical shortage of school psychologists, with a ratio averaging 1 psychologist per 1,000 students—far below the NASP-recommended ratio of 1 per 500-750 students, and some schools reaching as low as 1 per 3,000. CASP is committed to addressing this shortage by collaborating with stakeholders,

including the Governor's Office, state legislature, California Teachers Commission, and higher education institutions, to raise awareness, expand training programs, and reduce barriers for out-of-state practitioners. CASP advocates for high-quality, National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)-accredited training, increased fellowships and stipends to diversify and grow the workforce, and funding for paid internships in underserved areas to attract and retain school-based mental health providers.