



Comparative Analysis of the Coach Safely Acts From 2018–2026

Introduction

Between 2018 and 2026, multiple states adopted or considered versions of the “Coach Safely Act” or related youth sports safety legislation designed to reduce preventable injuries in youth athletics through mandatory coach education and injury mitigation training. These laws generally focus on concussion awareness, cardiac safety, heat-related illness prevention, emergency preparedness, and liability protections for trained volunteers and athletic personnel.

Although the statutes share a common purpose, states differ in oversight structures, applicability, age coverage, enforcement mechanisms, and the scope of protections provided. The following analysis compares the major provisions adopted across Alabama, Georgia, Arkansas, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Texas, North Carolina, and Louisiana.

Short Title & Legislative Reference

State	Short Title	Code Citation
Alabama	Coach Safety Act	Code of Alabama §§22-11F-2, 22-11F-4
Georgia	Coach Safely Act	O.C.G.A. Title 31, Ch. 53
Arkansas	Coach Safely Act	A.C.A. §6-18-720
Tennessee	Tennessee Code §49-6-3601	Local Education Agencies / Dept. of Education
Oklahoma	Coach Safely Act	Title 63, §1-241.1
Texas	Coach Safely Act	Occupations Code, Ch. 2053
North Carolina	Coach Safely Act for the Protection of Youth Athletes	G.S. §130A-443 et seq.
Louisiana	Louisiana Youth Athletics Liability & Injury Mitigation Bill (Coach Safely Act)	S.B. 260 amending R.S. 9:2798 and enacting R.S. 40:1087.2

Comparative Observation

Most jurisdictions adopted the title “Coach Safely Act,” reflecting a growing national movement toward standardized youth sports safety legislation. Tennessee differs by embedding its provisions directly into the education code through Tennessee Code §49-6-3601, while North Carolina explicitly emphasizes “Protection of Youth Athletes” in the statute title.

Administering Agency

Most states place oversight responsibility within state public health agencies, including:

- Alabama Department of Public Health
- Georgia Department of Public Health
- Arkansas Department of Health
- Oklahoma State Department of Health
- Texas Department of State Health Services
- North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
- Louisiana Department of Health

Tennessee is unique because it delegates implementation and enforcement responsibilities primarily to Local Education Agencies (LEAs), schools, and local organizations rather than a centralized health authority.

Comparative Trend

Centralized state health oversight promotes consistency in training standards, approvals, and enforcement. Tennessee's decentralized structure provides greater local flexibility but may create variations in implementation across jurisdictions.

Applicability

All states generally apply their laws to organizations conducting high-risk youth athletic activities.

Key Variations

- Oklahoma excludes school-sponsored athletic activities.
- Tennessee aligns compliance with local rules and emergency preparedness standards.
- Louisiana broadly applies to youth athletic activities rather than enumerating specific sports.

Age Coverage

State	Youth Athlete Definition
Alabama	≤14 years old or pre-7th grade
Georgia	≤14 years old
Arkansas	≤14 years old
Tennessee	Applies to youth activities under local LEA standards
Oklahoma	≤14 years old
Texas	<15 years old
North Carolina	≤18 years old
Louisiana	Broad youth athletics coverage

Comparative Observation

Most states focus on athletes aged 14 and younger. Texas modestly expands coverage to athletes under 15 years old, while North Carolina significantly broadens the law to include participants up to 18 years old.

Who Must Comply

Most states require compliance by:

- Coaches
- Athletic personnel
- Volunteers
- Team staff
- Managers
- Sports officials

Notable Differences

- Georgia specifically limits application to volunteer or unpaid personnel.
- Tennessee's provisions apply through local youth athletic programs and educational oversight structures.
- Louisiana conditions liability protections upon completion of approved training.

Comparative Observation

Some states adopt broad mandatory compliance frameworks (Alabama, Arkansas, Texas), while others narrowly focus on volunteer personnel or youth-specific organizations (Georgia, Tennessee).

High-Risk Sports Covered

Most statutes identify the following high-risk sports:

- Football
- Basketball
- Baseball
- Volleyball
- Soccer
- Hockey
- Cheerleading
- Lacrosse

Additional Variations

- Texas and North Carolina explicitly include field hockey.
- Tennessee defers to local LEA and organizational standards.
- Louisiana broadly applies to youth athletic activities without enumerating sports individually.

Exemptions

Common exemptions include:

- Athletic trainers
- Physicians
- Nurses
- First responders
- Trauma-trained medical professionals

State-Specific Variations

State	Unique Exemption
Tennessee	Annual training and emergency rehearsal provisions
Oklahoma	Excludes school-sponsored activities
Arkansas	Licensed teachers with coaching endorsements
Louisiana	Waivers available for documented CPR/first-aid proficiency

Training Requirements

State	Training Requirement	Topics Covered	Format	Cost	Completion Deadline	Renewal
Alabama	Youth injury mitigation	Concussions, heat illness, cardiac health, conditioning	Online/In-person	Free	30 days	Annual
Georgia	Youth injury mitigation	Same as Alabama	Online/Residence	Free	30 days	Annual
Arkansas	Youth injury mitigation	Same as Alabama	Online/Residence	Free	30 days	Annual
Tennessee	Conditioning & emergency planning	Local safety standards	Not specified	Varies	Annual	LEA maintained
Oklahoma	State-approved training	Injury mitigation & awareness	Online/In-person	Free if available	Upon engagement	Implied annual
Texas	Youth injury mitigation	Emergency preparedness, concussions, heat, conditioning	Online/In-person	Free	30 days	Annual
North Carolina	Youth sports injury education	CPR, first aid, conditioning	Dept.-approved	Free	30 days	Annual

State	Training Requirement	Topics Covered	Format	Cost	Completion Deadline	Renewal
Louisiana	Youth injury mitigation course	Emergency response, heat, cardiac safety, overuse injuries	Dept.-approved	Free	30 days	Annual

Comparative Observation

Online or in-person training has become the national standard. Core topics consistently include:

- Concussion management
- Heat-related illness prevention
- Cardiac health
- Emergency preparedness
- Conditioning and equipment safety

Newer laws increasingly incorporate:

- CPR certification
- Overuse injury prevention
- Recovery protocols
- Age-appropriate safety practices

Liability Protections

All states provide some degree of liability protection for trained coaches and athletic personnel who comply with approved safety standards.

Key Patterns

- Alabama, Arkansas, and Texas explicitly state that no new liability is imposed on political subdivisions.
- Texas provides one of the strongest express immunity provisions.
- Louisiana extends limitation-of-liability protections specifically to trained volunteer athletic personnel.
- Oklahoma implies immunity through compliance.
- Tennessee does not clearly define expanded liability protections.

Comparative Observation

Liability protection serves as a major policy incentive encouraging volunteer participation while promoting compliance with safety education requirements.

Compliance & Penalties

Most states require:

- Recordkeeping
- Annual course renewal
- Documentation of completion

Enforcement Differences

State	Enforcement Structure
Alabama	Graduated penalties: notice → public notice → fine → suspension
Model Bill	Graduated enforcement system
Tennessee	LEA/local oversight
Oklahoma	Optional rule promulgation
Most Other States	Limited or implied enforcement

Comparative Observation

Alabama remains one of the few states with a detailed enforcement framework. Most states rely primarily on voluntary compliance and liability incentives rather than punitive enforcement.

Effective Dates & Unique Features

State	Effective Date	Unique Feature
Alabama	Oct. 1, 2025	Explicit volunteer protections tied to Alabama law §6-5-336
Georgia	TBD	Applies only to volunteer coaches
Arkansas	Rules by Jan. 1, 2024	Teacher-coach exemption
Tennessee	Linked to Sudden Cardiac Arrest Prevention Act	Includes private/community organizations
Oklahoma	Upon enactment	Signed completion attestation required
Texas	Sept. 1, 2025	Explicit immunity clause; no liability for subdivisions
North Carolina	Aug. 1, 2026	Covers athletes up to age 18
Louisiana	Aug. 1, 2026	State-approved certification system and donated online course authorization

2026 - Louisiana's Distinctive Approach

Louisiana's 2026 legislation represents one of the most administratively detailed versions of the Coach Safely framework.

Key Louisiana Features

- Establishes a formal Louisiana Department of Health course approval process
- Requires publication and annual updates of approved training providers

- Authorizes donated online courses and donated funding for course acquisition
- Expands training to include:
 - Musculoskeletal overuse injuries
 - Recovery protocols
 - Heart abnormalities leading to sudden cardiac death
 - Emergency injury rehearsal procedures

Comparative Observation

Louisiana aligns closely with Alabama and Texas in linking injury mitigation training to liability protections. However, Louisiana uniquely combines immunity protections with a formal state certification and course publication system, creating greater administrative oversight than most existing Coach Safely laws.

Key National Trends Across Coach Safely Legislation

1. Standardized Injury Mitigation Training

All states require some form of safety or injury mitigation training, with increasing emphasis on comprehensive athlete wellness and emergency preparedness.

2. Expanding Age Coverage

Most laws focus on athletes 14 years old and younger, although:

- Texas extends protections to athletes under 15
- North Carolina extends protections to athletes up to 18

3. Liability Protection as a Policy Incentive

States consistently provide liability defenses or immunity protections to trained coaches who follow approved safety protocols.

4. Public Health Oversight

Most states place implementation authority within state health agencies, reinforcing the treatment of youth sports safety as a public health issue.

5. Limited Enforcement Mechanisms

Only Alabama and the proposed Model Bill contain detailed graduated penalty systems. Most states rely on voluntary compliance supported by immunity protections.

6. Emerging Safety Enhancements

Modern Coach Safely legislation increasingly incorporates:

- CPR certification
- Overuse injury prevention
- Recovery and conditioning protocols
- Age-appropriate safety techniques
- Explicit volunteer protections
- Administrative course approval systems

Conclusion

The evolution of Coach Safely legislation between 2018 and 2026 demonstrates a significant national shift toward formalized youth sports safety regulation. While states vary in implementation and enforcement, the overall legislative trend emphasizes mandatory coach education, injury prevention, emergency preparedness, and liability protection for compliant volunteers and athletic personnel.

Newer statutes—particularly in Texas, North Carolina, and Louisiana—reflect an increasingly comprehensive approach that expands beyond concussion awareness to broader athlete wellness, cardiac safety, overuse injury prevention, and structured state oversight. Collectively, these laws illustrate the growing recognition that properly trained coaches play a critical role in protecting youth athletes from preventable injuries and catastrophic medical events.