California Board of
PSYCHOLOGY

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LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY

AB 489 (Bonta) Chapter 615, Statutes of 2025 – Health care professions: deceptive terms or letters: artificial intelligence

Health Advice from Artificial Intelligence

Business & Professions Code 4999.8 and 4999.9

Operative Date of Legislation: January 1, 2026

Attention Board of Psychology (Board) stakeholders:

Assembly Bill (AB) 489 (Bonta) was signed by Governor Newsom on October 11, 2025, and becomes operative on January 1, 2026. This bill establishes new statutory provisions governing the use of artificial intelligence in contexts that may impact licensed health care professions.

Summary of Changes

AB 489 creates new statutes to protect consumers from being misled by artificial intelligence (AI) in health-related contexts. It is unlawful for any person, business, or organization to use AI to provide health information, advice, or services while representing, or allowing it to be understood, that such information is being delivered by a licensed professional when it is not. This prohibition includes the use of protected professional titles, clinical terminology, or other representations that could cause a consumer to believe the AI system is acting as a licensed psychologist or other licensed health care provider. Violations of these provisions are subject to enforcement by the Board of Psychology (Board).

The law also establishes standardized statewide definitions for "artificial intelligence" and "generative artificial intelligence" and applies these definitions to all professions regulated under the Business and Professions Code (BPC), including all licensees and registrants overseen by the Board.

These statutory changes reinforce consumer protection by ensuring that individuals can clearly distinguish between AI-generated content and services provided by qualified, licensed professionals, and by affirming that psychological services must be delivered only by individuals who hold the appropriate professional licensure.

Implementation

Effective January 1, 2026, it is a violation subject to enforcement by the Board for any person or entity regulated by the Board to use artificial intelligence (AI) in a way that leads the public to believe that health-related information, guidance, or services are being provided by a licensed health care professional when they are not. Under newly created Code sections 4999.8 and 4999.9, the use of AI or generative AI that presents itself as a natural person holding a Board-regulated license—or that uses protected titles, descriptors, or other indications reserved for licensees—constitutes unlicensed practice and is subject to Board action.

For licensees and registrants, any use of AI in clinical, supervisory, educational, or administrative settings must be transparent and appropriately disclosed. AI outputs must never be represented as psychologist-provided judgment or services, nor may AI be used in a way

that substitutes for the professional skill, diagnosis, or treatment decisions of a licensed psychologist. Using AI-generated information that could reasonably be mistaken for professional advice may constitute unprofessional conduct.

Licensees who incorporate AI into their practice must clearly identify AI-generated content and ensure it is not attributed to themselves or any Board-regulated registrant. This includes treatment summaries, educational materials, reports, automated communications, chat-based responses, or any documentation produced in whole or in part by AI. Licensees are responsible for reviewing, verifying, and validating any AI-generated material they choose to use. Failure to supervise or check AI output may expose licensees to allegations of negligence or aiding and abetting unlicensed practice.

These requirements apply equally to registrants—including psychological associates, psychological testing technicians, research psychoanalysts, and student research psychoanalysts. Registrants must not present AI-generated responses or documents as their own clinical judgment and must ensure AI tools used under supervision do not mimic or impersonate a licensed psychologist. Supervisors remain responsible for ensuring that supervised registrants comply with these standards.

The Board will enforce unauthorized use of protected titles, the misrepresentation of AI-generated content as licensed services, and any deployment of AI that could mislead the public about the source of health advice. Investigations may involve reviewing websites, advertising, telehealth platforms, chatbots, automated systems, or other digital tools. Enforcement actions may include cease-and-desist letters, citations, or formal discipline when AI is misrepresented as professional psychological care.