



NCAA HEALTH AND SAFETY

OVERVIEW

The NCAA Sport Science Institute

Since its inception in 2013, the NCAA Sport Science Institute has convened the brightest minds on campuses and leading medical and scientific organizations to promote safety, excellence and wellness in college student-athletes and to foster lifelong physical and mental development. Led by the NCAA chief medical officer, this work occurs through research, education and interassociation best practices.

Health and Safety Priority Areas

Through consultation with student-athletes, member schools, leading medical and sports medicine organizations and key sport stakeholders, the following strategic priorities have been identified:

- Cardiac health
- Concussion
- Doping and substance abuse
- Mental health
- Nutrition, sleep and performance
- Overuse injuries and periodization
- Sexual assault and interpersonal violence
- Athletics healthcare administration
- Data-driven decisions

HEALTH AND SAFETY PRIORITY AREAS

Cardiac Health

The SSI collaborates with the most respected medical and sports organizations in the country to address heart health. Together, these organizations have published peer-reviewed interassociation recommendations that have become the springboard for further research and collaborative efforts in support of the cardiovascular health of college athletes.

Key initiatives and resources:

- *Interassociation Consensus Statement on Cardiovascular Care of College Student-Athletes*: A resource of best practice guidance to help NCAA member schools provide cardiovascular care for college athletes and prepare for life-threatening cardiac events.
- *Research*: The NCAA is currently funding research conducted by the University of Washington and the Mayo Clinic (Minnesota) into the structural and genetic causes of sudden cardiac death in college student-athletes.

Concussion Safety

The SSI has worked to improve concussion diagnosis and management by athletic health care providers at its member schools and has taken aggressive steps to reduce the risk of repetitive head impact exposure in college athletes.

Key initiatives and resources:

- *NCAA-DoD Grand Alliance*: The NCAA has partnered with the U.S. Department of Defense in a \$46 million effort to fund the most comprehensive study conducted in the history of concussion research and that includes an education and research component aimed at improving the culture of concussion reporting.
- *Diagnosis and Management of Sport-Related Concussion Best Practices*: A resource of clinical best practices for team physicians and athletic trainers to support the clinical management of student-athletes with sport-related concussion.
- *Concussion Safety Protocol Legislation*: Legislation that requires Divisions I, II and III schools to have a concussion safety protocol consistent with the Diagnosis and Management of Sport-Related Concussion Best Practices and NCAA Concussion Protocol Checklist.
- *Year-Round Football Practice Contact for College Student-Athletes Recommendations*: Recommendations for NCAA football coaches that provides year-round football practice guidance. The recommendations considerably limit full contact practices, add non-contact and no practice sessions, eliminate two-a-day practices and emphasize safe tackling techniques to addresses student-athlete safety and minimize head impact exposure.
- *Concussion Fact Sheets*: Fact sheets for student-athletes and coaches that provide quick and easy-to-read information about concussion safety.
- *Concussion Safety Video for Student-Athletes*: A video for student-athletes that provides information about concussion safety.

Doping and Substance Abuse Prevention

The prevention of performance-enhancing drug use by college athletes is of critical importance to support fair and healthy play. The SSI partners with The National Center for Drug Free Sport to conduct more than \$6 million in annual performance-enhancing drug-testing and educational efforts to help member schools address the risks involved with the misuse of alcohol and recreational drugs. The drug testing program, along with clear related policies and effective educational programs, contributes to a campus environment that supports healthy choices and a positive environment for student-athletes.

Key initiatives and resources:

- *Substance Abuse Prevention Tool Kit*: A tool kit to assist campus personnel in efforts to reduce recreational and illicit substance abuse and to promote healthy choices and a positive environment for college athletes.
- *NCAA CHOICES Alcohol Education Grant*: A grant program that provides funding for NCAA member institutions and conferences to integrate athletics departments into campus-wide efforts to reduce alcohol abuse.
- *APPLE Training Institute*: An annual three-day national training institute, offered in partnership with the University of Virginia, for student-athletes, athletics administrators and campus partners dedicated to substance abuse prevention and health promotion of college athletes.

Mental Health

The NCAA partners with leading organizations to develop best practices and training modules for student-athletes, coaches and administrators in support of student-athlete mental well-being. The goal of these resources is to encourage a campus culture that destigmatizes help-seeking and facilitates early identification of mental health concerns through appropriate referral and care.

Key initiatives and resources:

- *Mental Health Best Practices*: A document with best practice guidance for athletics administrators and campus partners to use in support of student-athlete mental wellness.
- *Mental Wellness Educational Modules*: Interactive, online educational modules for student-athletes, coaches, and faculty athletics representatives that help promote mental wellness and resiliency and encourage and destigmatize help-seeking for mental health concerns.
- *Mental Health Interdisciplinary Team Planner*: A worksheet to assist athletics administrators in identifying tasks and resources associated with a comprehensive approach to understanding and supporting student-athlete mental wellness.
- *Mental Health Workshop Planning Kit*: A resource for conference offices to use in planning and implementing a mental health workshop that prepares campus teams to implement the Mental Health Best Practices.

Nutrition, Sleep and Performance

The healthy performance of college athletes is foundational to the work of the NCAA Sport Science Institute. In addition to promoting hydration, sleep and science-driven strength and conditioning efforts via resources for athletes, coaches and administrators, Division I and Division II schools may provide unlimited meals and snacks to fuel student-athletes on their campuses. The SSI also recently hosted a task force, in collaboration with leading experts across

the country, that will work to develop interassociation recommendations in support of the sleep health of college athletes.

Key initiatives and resources:

- *Nutrition, sleep and performance educational resources:* A variety of online and physical documents and handouts on disordered eating, hydration, nutrition, and other topics relevant to optimizing healthy performance in student-athletes.
- *Nutrition legislation:* Division I and Division II legislation allowing unlimited meals and snacks to student-athletes.
- *Task force on sleep and wellness:* An interdisciplinary group of researchers and clinicians convened in order to review the current data and discuss research related to the sleep health of student-athletes. Expected deliverables include educational materials to guide campuses in their efforts to improve the quality of sleep and sleep hygiene of student-athletes.

Overuse Injuries and Periodization

College athletes are often assumed to be some of the healthiest members of society, yet participation in years of competitive sports can expose them to overuse or overtraining injuries. The SSI takes progressive steps to work with youth advocates, parents, clinicians, coaches and national sport governing bodies to modify safety guidelines, playing rules and equipment standards to minimize those risks and provide student-athletes with the best opportunity to enjoy a healthy career.

Key initiatives and resources:

- *NCAA Sports Medicine Handbook:* A handbook provides guidance for directors of athletics, athletic trainers, team physicians and other sport stakeholders to promote a safe environment for college athletes and to assist in the development of sports medicine policies and practices that support student-athlete health and safety.

Sexual Assault and Interpersonal Violence Prevention

Sexual assault and interpersonal violence on campus are important issues in higher education that impact the well-being of students and the campus community. The NCAA is committed to supporting and working with campuses to develop collaborative programming, resources, tool kits and best practices to create and maintain a safe campus environment.

Key initiatives and resources:

- *Sexual Violence Prevention Tool Kit:* A resource that provides resource-independent tools for athletics administrators and university partners to address sexual violence prevention.
- *NCAA Commission to Combat Campus Sexual Violence:* A commission created by the NCAA Board of Governors to proactively examine issues and propose solutions related

to what athletics departments, conferences and the national Association could do to address campus sexual violence to achieve positive culture change. The commission's work resulted in association-wide policy requiring campus-based mandatory sexual violence prevention education and an annual attestation process by campus leaders.

- *Addressing Sexual Violence and Interpersonal Violence*: Guide to identify athletics departments role in support of safe and healthy campuses in 2014.
- *Step UP Bystander Intervention Training*: A biannual, three-day facilitator training that provides athletics administrators and campus partners with a framework for how to create sustainable bystander intervention program on their campuses.
- *It's On Us*: The NCAA is a national partner in the It's On Us campaign to combat campus sexual assault.

Athletics Health Care Administration

The NCAA SSI works with the medical community and member schools to promote best practices and policy development in athletics health care management and service delivery.

Key initiatives and resources:

- *Independent Medical Care Legislation*: Association-wide legislation that requires all schools to provide independent medical care and affirm the unchallengeable autonomous authority of primary athletics health care providers to determine medical management and return to play decisions related to student-athletes. This bylaw also requires schools to designate an athletics health care administrator to oversee the campus' athletic health care administration and delivery.
- *Independent Medical Care for College Student-Athletes Best Practices*: This document provides best practice recommendations for athletics administrators, team physicians and athletic trainers in support of efforts to deliver student-athlete-centered athletics health care.
- *Designation of Team Physician*: Legislation that requires all schools to designate a licensed physician to serve as team physician for its intercollegiate athletics teams. The team physician shall be a doctor of medicine or doctor of osteopathic medicine with a current license in good standing to practice medicine in the state in which the institution is located. The team physician shall be authorized to oversee the medical services for injuries and illnesses incidental to a student-athlete's participation in intercollegiate athletics.

Data-Driven Decisions

The SSI is constantly evolving its insights to reflect the most advanced research and provide the most innovative information and education to member schools. The NCAA has served as a national leader in the sport injury data collection effort for more than 30 years and works collaboratively with NCAA Research to support the development of health and safety legislation, educational policies and best practices that enhance the college athlete experience. The NCAA also supports the National Center for Catastrophic Sport Injury Research, which tracks and manages the mandatory reporting of catastrophic injuries and death among student-athletes at member institutions.

Key initiatives and resources:

- ***NCAA Injury Surveillance Program:*** A program designed to track and analyze sport-related injuries and medical illnesses. Additional membership participation in the program is needed. For information about how to sign-up your school to participate, [click here](#).
- ***Catastrophic Sport Injury Reporting:*** NCAA Association-wide legislation requires member schools to report annually on all student-athlete fatalities and catastrophic injuries, regardless of whether such fatality/injury is sport-related. For more information or to report a catastrophic injury, [click here](#).
- ***Playing Rules:*** As understanding of the health and safety issues in college sports grows through research and data analysis, the NCAA makes changes to playing rules to make competition safer. Recent examples include targeting, kickoff and helmet-loss rules in football.