

Checklist

MENTAL HEALTH BEST PRACTICES CHECKLIST: BEST PRACTICES FOR MEMBER SCHOOLS IN SUPPORTING AND PROMOTING STUDENT-ATHLETE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

This checklist serves as a supplement to the Mental Health Best Practices, Second Edition, and is intended to aid membership in implementation of Mental Health Best Practices; it is not intended to serve as a stand-alone document. Completion of the Mental Health Best Practices Checklist should be done in accordance with the best practice recommendations and foundational principles discussed in the Mental Health Best Practices.

Best Practice 1:

Create Healthy Environments That Support Mental Health and Promote Well-Being

CORE COMPONENTS:

- A written plan that is developed in collaboration with a licensed mental health care provider.
- Plan includes multiple levels for mental health promotion programming, such as:
 - Individual student-athletes.
 - Teams and the personnel that comprise them.
 - Athletics departments.
 - Campus culture and policy.
 - Community, state and federal culture and policy.
- Plan considers diversity, equity and inclusion throughout all aspects of health promoting environments.

ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER:

- Train and support coaches about mental health and their role in mental health promotion. Relevant topics may include mental health first aid, mental health literacy, trauma-informed coaching, cultural sensitivity, empathic listening and resources for supporting and promoting coach mental health.
- Provide opportunity for athlete-facing staff to have a working knowledge of trauma-informed approaches.
- Provide annual education about the importance of sleep for health and performance and strategies for improving sleep hygiene.
- Provide guidance and support related to social media and NIL.
- Engage recruits and their families through sharing information about mental health resources and mental health promotion initiatives.
- Develop a written plan to support student-athletes in preparing for a successful transition in or from sport.
- Consider continuous improvement processes that consider dynamic multilevel risk and protective factors of student-athlete mental health and well-being.

Best Practice 2:

Procedures for Identification of Student-Athletes With Mental Health Symptoms and Disorders, Including Mental Health Screening Tools

CORE COMPONENTS:

- Use validated screening tools as part of a process to identify student-athletes experiencing psychological distress.
- Screen all student-athletes at least once annually, with consideration for pre-participation examination screening as a baseline.
- Screening is used in consultation with a licensed mental health care provider.

ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER:

- In addition to screening for psychological distress, screen for specific mental health disorders and risk factors.
- Use screening tools that have athlete-relevant cut points and/or screening tools that have been validated diverse populations.
- To foster trust with student-athletes, share screening information with student-athletes on an annual basis, including the purpose of screening and what happens after screening.
- Have athlete-facing staff complete evidence-based training in mental health literacy.
- Consider continuous improvement strategies that help ensure mental health screening is meeting student-athlete and member school needs.

Best Practice 3:

Mental Health Action Plans That Outline Referral Pathways of Student-Athletes to Qualified Providers

CORE COMPONENTS:

- Have written action plans for routine and emergency mental health care needs.
- Action plans address the full spectrum of mental health care, including:
 - How student-athletes with mental health symptoms are identified.
 - When and how they are referred for mental health care, including evaluation, ongoing treatment, follow up and reentry when indicated.
 - Who is involved in the identification, referral and care process.
- Action plans provide well-defined considerations for what constitutes a routine and/or emergency mental health condition.
- Action plans discuss opportunities for regular outreach, including communication, rehearsal and ongoing continuous improvement.

ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER:

- Recognize that student-athletes may have experienced or be experiencing maltreatment and/or psychosocial trauma by prioritizing student-athlete safety and trust, empowering athletes in the care process and attending to cultural and individual identity factors.
- Conduct annual outreach about action plans to all stakeholders involved.
- Provide a brief visual summary of the action plan(s).
- Include post-crisis support in the action plan(s).
- Consider non-clinical aspects of care.
- Consult with campus disability services.
- Continuous improvement strategies could consider how action plans are understood, implemented and experienced.

Best Practice 4:

Licensure of Providers Who Oversee and Manage Student-Athlete Mental Health Care

CORE COMPONENTS:

- Formal evaluation and treatment of student-athletes with mental health symptoms should be performed by qualified mental health care providers acting within the scope of their clinical licensure.

ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER:

- Recognize the value of accessible providers and student-athlete choice of provider in the care process.
- Prioritize cultural sensitivity in recruitment, hiring, retention and professional development of licensed mental health care providers.
- Continuous improvement strategies could consider student-athlete experiences with accessing and utilizing mental health services, while being mindful of student-athlete privacy.

