

Supporting Student-Athlete Mental Health – A Statement from the NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards

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The NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports seeks to amplify the voices of student-athletes on mental health and offers the following information in support of the [recent statement](#) from the NCAA Student-Athlete Advisory Committee and NCAA Board of Governors Student-Athlete Engagement Committee:

CSMAS applauds the effort of the NCAA Student-Athlete Advisory Committee and NCAA Board of Governors Student-Athlete Engagement Committee and acknowledges the urgency and magnitude of the current mental health crisis that touches every aspect of society. Further, CSMAS notes recent traumatic events, including loss of student-athletes to suicide, have generated new conversations and momentum around mental health support.

Collegiate student-athletes – like many college students – experience challenges that can detract from their mental well-being including stress, eating disorders, burnout, depression and anxiety, but may be hesitant to seek counseling and other professional help services. Data from the third [NCAA student-athlete well-being study](#), published earlier this year, indicates that less than half of student-athletes feel comfortable seeking mental health support on campus. Moreover, student-athletes may carry the additional burdens that come from public expectations associated with performing and competing at the highest levels while simultaneously managing their personal and academic responsibilities.

CSMAS is continuing its work to facilitate membership efforts to improve access to quality mental health care and creating a culture where care-seeking for mental health issues is as normative as care seeking for physical injuries. All involved in the conduct of college athletics have a responsibility to contribute to a culture that not only breaks the stigma surrounding mental health, but also promotes health and well-being.

It is important to note that NCAA legislation currently requires member schools to make available to student-athletes mental health services, resources and educational materials that are consistent with the [Mental Health Best Practices](#) document, which was endorsed by over 20 of the leading mental health, sports medicine and medical associations in the country.

For example, CSMAS highlights Recommendation No. 2 which notes that schools should have a mental health emergency action and management plan and practice it regularly.

As campuses act to support student-athletes and create normative environments for mental-health care-seeking, CSMAS notes the following:

1. Research on Student-Athlete Mental Health.

Data from the third [NCAA student-athlete well-being study](#), published earlier this year, indicates student-athlete mental health concerns remain elevated (1.5 to 2 times higher) compared to pre-pandemic survey data. For example, nearly one third of student-athletes reported feeling overwhelming anxiety constantly or most every day. Notably, mental health concerns remained highest among women, student-athletes of color, those identifying on the queer-spectrum and those reporting family economic hardship.

2. Mental Health Education and Resources.

Schools should be aware of a comprehensive selection of mental health education and resources available to assist campus-level efforts to support student-athletes.

Click [here](#) for a complete listing of the NCAA’s mental health resources, which include the Mental Health Best Practices, the [final report](#) from the [NCAA Diverse Student-Athlete Mental Health and Well-Being Summit](#) (an event that convened industry experts and stakeholders to discuss the specific mental health challenges facing student-athletes of color and possible avenues to address those issues), a [mental health workshop planning toolkit](#), [interactive modules](#) for student-athletes, coaches, and administrators and much more.

Additionally, the NCAA Social Series has featured a number of timely conversations on mental health. Watch on the [NCAA YouTube](#) channel or catch the audio recording on [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcasts](#) or [SoundCloud](#).

3. Next Steps/Action.

Following the Diverse Student-Athlete Mental Health and Well-Being Summit, CSMAS [commissioned a Mental Health Advisory Group](#) (which includes membership, student-athlete and industry expert representatives) to be a standing group that advises the Association on emerging developments in mental health science and policy. Its first task will be to recommend updates to existing NCAA mental health materials, including the Mental Health Best Practices. The group first met in October and expects to continue its review of the Mental Health Best Practices over the coming year.

Thank you for listening to student-athletes and acting to support their mental health. Feedback and questions related to available resources can be sent to ssi@ncaa.org.