Athletics Health Care Administrator Handbook

A Guide for Athletics Health Care Administrators







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This handbook is intended for athletics health care administrators at NCAA member schools, as established by NCAA Independent Medical Care legislation, to clarify and orient them to their designation and role.

Athletics Health Care Administrator Handbook:
A guide for athletics health care administrators

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Athletics Health Care Administrator Designation

What is an athletics health care administrator?

A LEGISLATED RESPONSIBILITY

The athletics health care administrator is a designation required by NCAA legislation. Specifically, independent medical care legislation requires schools to designate an athletics health care administrator as part of a broader obligation to establish a structure that supports the delivery of independent medical care for student-athletes.

THE DESIGNATED ATHLETICS HEALTH CARE ADMINISTRATOR

Each school has the flexibility to determine who best fits this designation based on the school's individual needs, resources and staffing configurations. Most NCAA schools designate an athletics health care provider as the AHCA. Around 60% of AHCAs are head athletic trainers. The AHCA cannot be a coach. The AHCA designation does not require schools to create a new position; rather, it should be assigned to an individual who actively participates in decision making related to the school's health care administration.

Schools are strongly encouraged to appoint individuals with relevant experience and medical knowledge to ensure effective advocacy within the athletic healthcare environment including appropriate staffing levels, compensation and professional standards.

NCAA INDEPENDENT MEDICAL CARE LEGISLATION

As noted in the NCAA Constitution and clarified in legislation, "An active member school shall establish an administrative structure that provides independent medical care and affirms the unchallengeable autonomous authority of primary athletics health care providers (team physicians and athletic trainers) to determine medical management and return-to-play decisions related to student-athletes. An active member school shall designate an athletics health care administrator to oversee the institution's athletics health care administration and delivery."

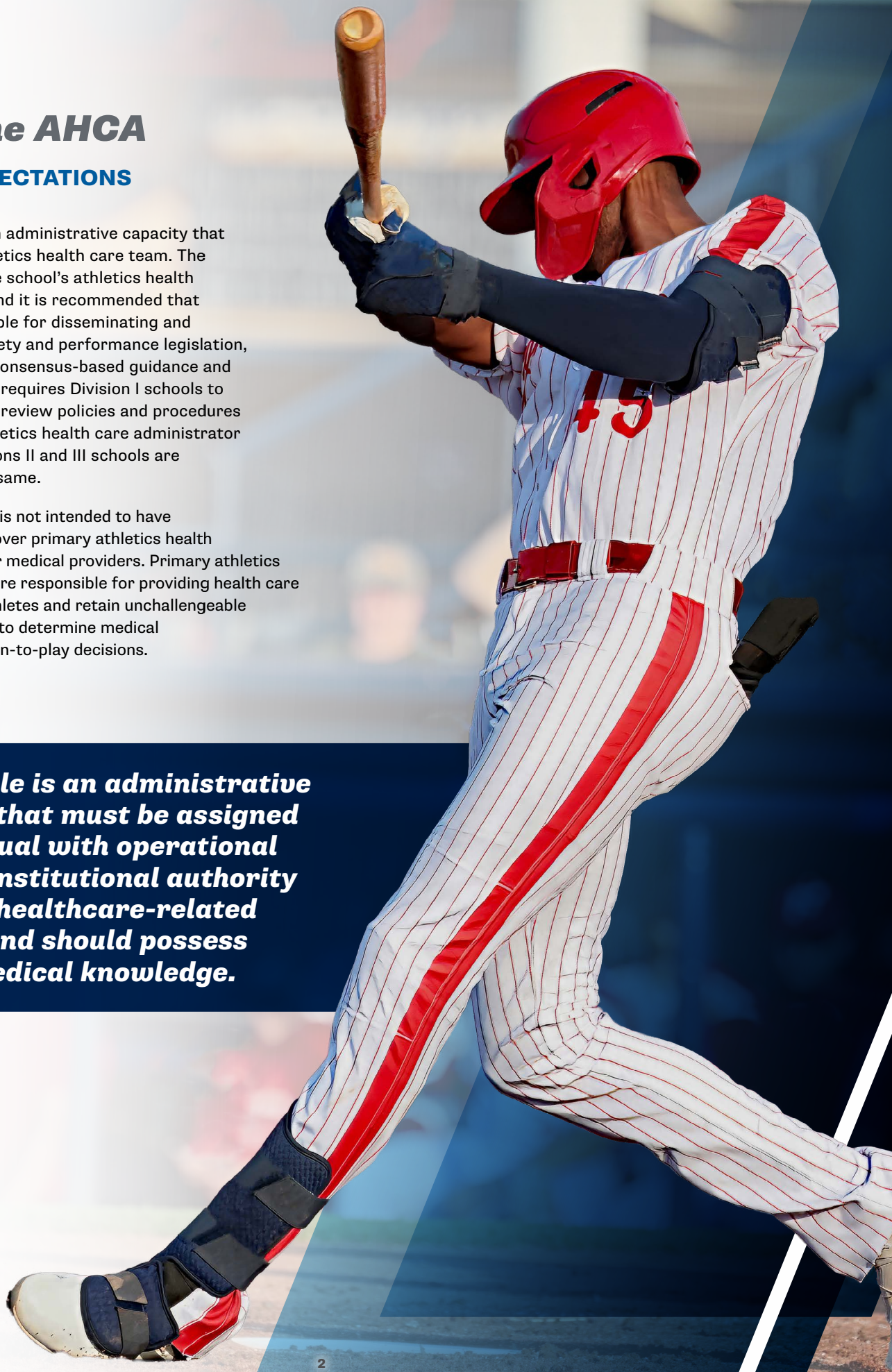
Role of the AHCA

ROLE AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE AHCA

The AHCA serves in an administrative capacity that complements the athletics health care team. The individual oversees the school's athletics health care administration, and it is recommended that the AHCA be responsible for disseminating and monitoring health, safety and performance legislation, policy, evidence- and consensus-based guidance and resources. Legislation requires Division I schools to establish and annually review policies and procedures that empower the athletics health care administrator to do this work. Divisions II and III schools are encouraged to do the same.

The AHCA designation is not intended to have supervisory authority over primary athletics health care providers or other medical providers. Primary athletics health care providers are responsible for providing health care services to student-athletes and retain unchallengeable autonomous authority to determine medical management and return-to-play decisions.

The AHCA role is an administrative designation that must be assigned to an individual with operational insight and institutional authority to influence healthcare-related operations and should possess sufficient medical knowledge.



CHECKLIST OF AHCA RESPONSIBILITIES

It is recommended that the role of the athletics health care administrator include three primary areas of focus:

1 Policies and Procedures. Continually monitor and assess athletics department's health, safety and performance policies and procedures to ensure compliance with NCAA legislation and establish consistency with evidence- and consensus-based guidance.

- ❑ Work with identified stakeholders to determine roles and responsibilities for fulfilling, monitoring and rehearsing health- and safety-related requirements.
- ❑ Establish an action plan for identifying and addressing policies and practices not aligned with NCAA legislation and evidence- and consensus-based guidance.
- ❑ Implement a continuous improvement process to regularly assess policies and procedures and related outcomes. Identify and implement strategies to enhance health care delivery.

2 Awareness. Stay informed of NCAA health-, safety- and performance-related legislation, evidence- and consensus-based guidance and resources.

- ❑ Work with athletics compliance staff to identify current NCAA health, safety and performance legislation.
- ❑ Read the **NCAA Sports Medicine Handbook**.
- ❑ **Read** the evidence- and consensus-based guidance and note guidance that is legislated or approved as Association-wide policy.
- ❑ Visit the **SSI website** and review resources.
- ❑ Confirm that the AHCA contact information in the **NCAA Membership Directory** is accurate.
- ❑ Sign up for the SSI quarterly **newsletter**.

To update information in the NCAA Membership Directory, log in to NCAA My Apps at **apps.ncaa.org**.

3 Communication. Regularly communicate health, safety and performance legislation, evidence- and consensus-based guidance and resources with athletics department and campus stakeholders.

- ❑ Identify stakeholders who have any responsibility for student-athlete health, safety and performance (see **page 4**). Introduce and explain the role of the AHCA and determine shared interests that support student-athlete health, safety and performance.
- ❑ Develop and implement a system for regularly disseminating relevant health, safety and performance information, including SSI and NCAA communications, with identified stakeholders.
- ❑ Ensure the email addresses of relevant stakeholders (e.g., team physicians, head athletic trainers) are up to date in the **NCAA Membership Directory**.
- ❑ Direct AHCA-related questions to the SSI at **ssi@ncaa.org**.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Athletics Health Care Collaboration Team

The AHCA designation necessitates regular and active engagement with stakeholders within the athletics department and across campus. While the specific nature of these engagements will vary depending on the size and structure of each school, below is a nonexhaustive list of possible stakeholders.

- Alcohol and Drug Prevention Coordinator
- Campus Risk Managers
- Director of Academic Support
- Director of Athletics
- Director of Counseling/ Psychological Services
- Director of Health Services
- Drug Testing Site Coordinator
- Faculty Athletics Representative
- Head Athletic Trainer
- Head Sport Coaches
- Head Team Physician
- Licensed Mental Health Professional
- Life Skills Administrator
- Senior Compliance Administrator
- Senior Woman Administrator
- Sports Dietitian/Nutritionist
- Strength and Conditioning Personnel
- Student-Athlete Advisory Committees
- Student-Athlete Affairs Administrator
- Title IX Coordinator

NCAA Health, Safety and Performance

Student-athlete health, safety and performance are foundational components of the NCAA mission, have been a priority of the NCAA for more than 100 years and are embedded in the NCAA Constitution.

The NCAA Sport Science Institute

Led by the NCAA chief medical officer, the mission of the SSI is to be the preeminent sport science voice for college sports and to provide expert support to NCAA schools in their effort to protect and enhance the mental and physical health, safety and performance of college student-athletes.

NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports

Since its inception in 2013, the SSI has worked collaboratively with the NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports. The mission of CSMAS is to provide expertise and leadership to the Association in order to promote a healthy and safe environment for student-athletes. The SSI and CSMAS work in support of student-athlete health, safety and performance through research, education and best practices in collaboration with member schools, national governing bodies, medical and research experts and leading scientific and sports medicine organizations.

NCAA HEALTH, SAFETY AND PERFORMANCE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Association's health, safety and performance strategic priorities as approved by the NCAA Board of Governors are:

- Mental and Physical Health.
- Sport-Related Injury and Illness.
- Training and Performance.
- Education and Policy.



NCAA HEALTH, SAFETY AND PERFORMANCE GOVERNANCE

The chart below provides an overview of the governance bodies and collaborative processes involved in NCAA health, safety and performance.

NCAA Board of Governors

The **Board of Governors** provides strategic leadership on Association-wide issues that impact all three NCAA divisions. It consists of presidents and chancellors from each division, graduated student-athletes, select leaders from the NCAA membership and independent members. The board works to ensure that each division aligns and upholds the Association's core values, fundamental policies and guiding principles while addressing matters that impact all of college sports.

NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports

CSMAS, an Association-wide committee, is comprised of 25 members, including designated positions for physicians, athletic trainers, mental health practitioners, athletics administrators, coaches, researchers and student-athletes. CSMAS does not have authority to enact legislation and must work with the Board of Governors and appropriate divisional governance bodies to make certain policy and legislative changes. For example, CSMAS could recommend a legislative change to each of the divisions, which then must decide whether to introduce the recommendation as a legislative proposal. If introduced, the legislative proposal follows the process of that division.

NCAA Sport Science Institute

Legislation establishes that the SSI and CSMAS work collaboratively to advance student-athlete health, safety and performance through research, education, policy development and evidence- and consensus-based guidance.



NCAA Divisional Governance Bodies

CSMAS works with divisional governance bodies responsible for determining legislative agendas in each division. Any health, safety and performance legislative recommendation must follow the appropriate division's legislative process.



CSMAS Advisory Groups

Created by CSMAS to provide input on health, safety and performance topics, including the development and maintenance of evidence- and consensus-based guidance. Includes subject matter experts, governance and student-athlete representatives from all three divisions.

CSMAS Subcommittees

Review, consider and act on recurring or urgent matters on behalf of the committee. These include the Administrative, Drug-Testing, Prevention and Performance and Research Subcommittees.

NCAA HEALTH, SAFETY AND PERFORMANCE LEGISLATION

The Association is committed to the principle of student-athlete well-being, which is codified in the NCAA Constitution. Consistent with that principle is the school's responsibility to ensure compliance with NCAA legislation.

Compliance with NCAA Health, Safety and Performance Legislation

It is recommended that the AHCA work in partnership with the athletics compliance staff to facilitate understanding and sharing of relevant health, safety and performance legislation. In addition, AHCAs work with the primary athletics health care providers to identify and help implement strategies that ensure athletics health care is being delivered in a manner consistent with existing legislation and evidence- and consensus-based guidance.

Schools that are found to be in violation of NCAA legislation could be subject to penalties that impact the school and the eligibility of student-athletes.

It is recommended that AHCAs work with their athletics compliance administrators to closely review and consider all health, safety and performance-related legislation. A summary of relevant legislative requirements can be found in the NCAA Sports Medicine Handbook. Additionally, all legislation is available through the Legislative Service Database for the Internet (LSDBi).



NCAA HEALTH, SAFETY AND PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE- AND CONSENSUS-BASED GUIDANCE

The NCAA, through the work of CSMAS and the SSI, partners with leading medical, scientific and sports medicine organizations to develop and promote evidence- and consensus-based guidance. Athletics health care administrators are encouraged to share this guidance with campus stakeholders and to support the implementation of policies and procedures that support practices consistent with current guidance.

Evidence- and consensus-based guidance is created when requested by a Board of Governors recognized committee, CSMAS or a division. Specifically, the NCAA Constitution requires the Association to identify and promote guidance, rules and policies based on consensus of the medical, scientific, sports medicine and sport-governing communities. The policies and procedures that establish the threshold and method in which such guidance will be identified and provided to the membership can be found here: **Policies and Procedures for Consensus-Based Guidance**.

For more information on existing evidence- and consensus-based guidance, including those approved as Association-wide policy, visit **Key Publications**.

DIVISION I STUDENT-ATHLETE CORE GUARANTEES

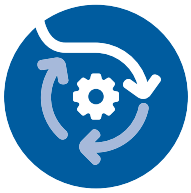
AHCAs at Division I schools, as well as those at Division II or III schools that compete in Division I sports, play an important role in ensuring that schools adhere to the NCAA **Division I Student-Athlete Core Guarantees** related to student-athlete health, safety and performance, as required by legislation. These guarantees, which include attestation requirements, strengthen student-athlete benefits and services, provide greater scholarship protections and raise the standards expected of Division I programs. Review these and other attestation requirements on the **NCAA Membership Attestation Requirements** web page.



AHCA Policies and Procedures

Division I schools must establish and annually review policies and procedures that empower the athletics health care administrator with the authority to oversee the school's athletics health care administration and delivery.

NCAA Division I Bylaw **18.2.4.19**.



Compliance with Consensus-Based Health, Safety and Performance Guidance

Division I schools must attest to being in compliance with evidence- and consensus-based guidance on providing health, safety and performance support as identified by the NCAA Board of Governors, including:

- **Statement on Cardiovascular Care of College Student-Athletes** and **companion checklist**.
- **Independent Medical Care for College Student-Athletes Best Practices**.
- **Preventing Catastrophic Injury and Death in Collegiate Athletes**.
- **Concussion Safety Protocol Checklist**.
- **Mental Health Best Practices: Understanding and Supporting Student-Athlete Mental Health, 2nd Edition**.

NCAA Division I Bylaw **25.2.4.26**.



Review of Health, Safety and Performance Support Services

Division I schools must complete a comprehensive review of its mental and physical health, safety and performance support services (e.g., legislative and policy requirements, best practice considerations) at least once every four years.

NCAA Division I Bylaw **20.2.4.23**.



Post-Incident Review

Division I schools must conduct a post-incident review following an athletically-related catastrophic injury. The purpose of the requirement is to identify areas for improvement in patient care.

NCAA Division I Bylaw **20.2.4.22**.

Review the Aug. 20, 2024, **Educational Column** for additional information on the Division I Core Guarantees.

NCAA HEALTH, SAFETY AND PERFORMANCE RESOURCES

The NCAA, together with leading medical organizations, behavioral health centers and subject matter experts, provides educational resources for member schools to promote and support the mental and physical health and well-being of student-athletes.

Key Publications

The Key Publications page serves as a centralized hub where users can easily access up-to-date guidance in one place. Regularly refreshed over time, this page features evidence- and consensus-based resources developed by the NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports.

Mental and Physical Health

Member schools have enshrined in the NCAA Constitution their commitment to facilitating an environment that reinforces physical and mental health within athletics by ensuring access to appropriate resources and open engagement with respect to physical and mental health.

Sport-Related Illness and Injury

Since its founding, the NCAA has been dedicated to supporting member schools in their efforts to protect student-athletes from sport-related injury. Through playing and practice rules, educational resources, best practices and research, the NCAA is actively working to support member schools in their efforts to safeguard student-athletes from injury and illness.

Training and Performance

For athletes to perform at their best, they must have healthy fuel and training. Member schools are working hard to making sure student-athletes have both.

Education and Policy

Each of the NCAA's three divisions has made a constitutional commitment to developing and sharing guidance, rules and policies based on the consensus of the medical, scientific, sports medicine and sport governing communities for student-athlete mental and physical health, safety and performance. This guidance is provided through best practices, programming and educational resources developed for the collegiate environment.

Data-Driven Decisions

Availability and access to athletics healthcare and sport injury data is foundational to this effort and the SSI has served as a national leader in the sport injury data collection effort for more than 30 years. Through **NCAA Catastrophic Sport Injury Reporting**, member schools are required to submit annual data on all student-athlete fatalities and catastrophic injuries. Additionally, the **NCAA Injury Surveillance Program** aggregates detailed injury and exposure data across sports, enabling long-term analysis and informed decision-making.



Stay Connected With SSI

For questions, or to learn more about the role of an athletics heath care administrator:

Email the SSI
ssi@ncaa.org

Sign up for the SSI newsletter
The SSI's quarterly newsletter provides the latest information to support the health and safety of student-athletes. To sign up, visit us at ncaa.org and click on "Sign up for the SSI Newsletter."

View SSI Spotlight episodes
Hosted by the NCAA CMO, these regular webinars highlight timely health, safety and performance priority topics featuring subject matter experts from the membership and the scientific and medical communities.

Visit the SSI website
Learn more about the work of the SSI and its four strategic priority areas by visiting the SSI website at ncaa.org/ssi.

Visit the AHCA homepage
Find resources and information specifically for athletics health care administrators by visiting the SSI website at ncaa.org/ahca.

To ensure you receive the most up-to-date information in your inbox, log in to NCAA My Apps at apps.ncaa.org and confirm that your email address is correct within the NCAA Membership Directory.