



Substance Misuse Prevention and Intervention

An Athletics Tool Kit



SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

This resource for athletics administrators was advanced and fostered through the contributions of the many dedicated individuals and organizations working to contribute to a campus environment that supports healthy choices, fair competition and a positive experience for college athletes. The following organizations supported this resource as a comprehensive approach for athletics departments to effectively address substance misuse prevention efforts in collaboration with broader campus efforts.

Higher education associations and sports medicine organizations that indicated support for the tool kit are listed below:

ACE – American Council on Education

ACHA – American College Health Association

ACPA – College Student Educators International

ACUHO-I – Association of College and University Housing Officers - International

AMSSM – American Medical Society for Sports Medicine - “Affirmation of Value” designation

ASCA – Association of Student Conduct Administration

FARA – Faculty Athletics Representatives Association

IACLEA – International Association of Collegiate Law Enforcement Administrators

N4A – The National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics

NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education

NATA – National Athletic Trainers’ Association

NIRSA – Leaders in Collegiate Recreation

NPC – National Panhellenic Conference

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Substance Misuse Prevention and Intervention An Athletics Tool Kit

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Table of Contents

Introduction1

Promoting a Culture of Prevention in Athletics3

Checklists for Comprehensive Substance Misuse and Prevention5

Resources for Consideration 10

Strategic Action Plan..... 11



Introduction

In collaboration with athletics stakeholders and campus substance misuse prevention experts, and guided by the latest prevention science strategies, the NCAA Sport Science Institute has designed this tool kit to support athletics administrators in collaboration with their campus colleagues in efforts to reduce substance misuse and to promote healthy choices, fair competition and a positive environment for college athletes.

This resource identifies key principles shared by successful prevention programs and identifies 10 strategies as part of a comprehensive approach for athletics administrators to use to address substance misuse prevention, intervention and treatment. The tool kit was developed with consideration given to the following contextual frameworks:

1. NCAA Doping, Drug Testing and Drug Education Task Force Recommendations.

In July 2013 and April 2014, the NCAA Sport Science Institute engaged a task force of experts working in the fields of Olympic drug testing, drug education and anti-doping research and prevention science. These experts focused their efforts on the ethical considerations related to doping and performance drug use, the motivations for recreational drug use, the latest prevention science and deterrence strategies to reduce doping and substance misuse, and best practices to promote healthy choices to enhance athletic performance and life success.

With regard to alcohol and other recreational drugs, recommendations from those meetings included:

- Continue to research why student-athletes participate in high-risk drinking.
- Investigate and match interventions to the motivations for use; provide education and support to student-athletes for underlying issues that may drive drug use.
- Move from information dissemination to effective educational programming.
- Link deterrence efforts to athletic performance.
- Prepare student-athletes to intervene effectively and safely with teammates and friends who are in distress or who are engaging in harmful behaviors.
- Engage coaches in messaging, policy development and education, including messages about expectations, health and performance issues, and intervention programs.
- Develop relationships and collaborate with campus professionals to identify mental health and addiction issues, and to refer student-athletes to treatment services.
- Employ skill-based education that includes more social interaction (for example, effective resistance skills).
- Look to successful campaigns that have reduced drunken driving behaviors and smoking, and apply those same principles to reduce substance misuse, with messages that reinforce intentional leadership and peer-to-peer interventions (for example, “Friends don’t let friends ...”).
- Address campus and departmental factors that contribute to or deter use; engage stakeholders across campus in developing policy and coordinating effective educational programming and messaging.
- Consider how sponsorship relationships may undermine campus prevention efforts.
- Address the culture that encourages athletes to “push through no matter what,” which could lead them to ingest alcohol or take cannabis and/or medications to mask pain.
- Engage circles of influence to include coaches, parents and other campus constituents.



Programs that target the larger environment and the broader student body, rather than solely student-athletes, support all students in healthy choices. Collaboration between the athletics department and other campus departments involved in alcohol education is a vital element of that environment and provides athletics departments with support for education efforts delivered to student-athletes and coaches.

2. The College Effect

“The college effect” asserts that when students come to campus, they’re exposed to environments that enable and promote high-risk drinking and substance use behaviors. This, coupled with the misperception that most students are engaged in high-risk behaviors, drive actual behavior. Misperceptions often are reinforced in various media, and unfortunately, by well-intentioned campus administrators. New students are susceptible to these factors that increase risk for use and misuse and may be more likely to engage in unhealthy behaviors to achieve a misplaced sense of belonging through shared behaviors. This tool kit intends to overcome “the college effect.”

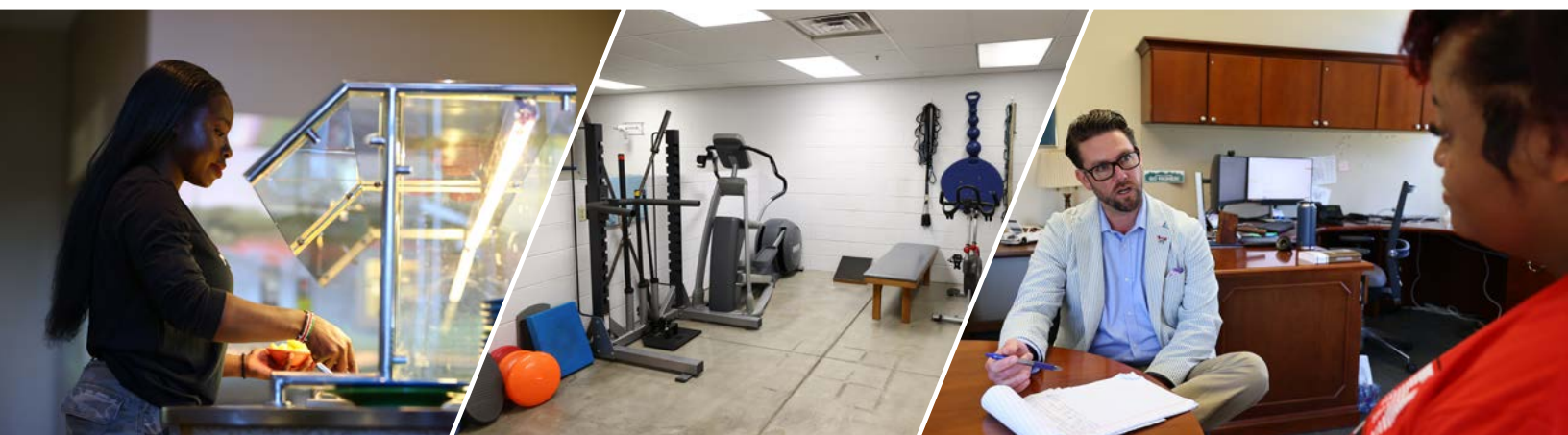
3. Student-Athlete Risk and Protective Factors

Athletics departments need to take a comprehensive approach to addressing risk and protective factors, including through policy, effective educational programs and social and environmental factors. The nature and culture of athletics and of student-athletes provides for both protective and risk factors, and these can be leveraged to support healthy choices. Athletics departments can emphasize those protective factors that

value teamwork, leadership, performance, compliance and value of sport to reinforce decisions that support success. Alternatively, athletics departments need to pay attention to those factors existing in the athletics culture that might undermine positive individual choices, such as group think, team dynamics, external controls, winning at all costs and an overemphasized athletics identity. Team discussions that recognize and address these factors promote an individual’s critical thinking about personal choices.

4. Athletics Department Role and Responsibilities

The NCAA recognizes that alcohol misuse may occur in conjunction with athletics events. Further, the NCAA recognizes that athletics can be a partner with campus prevention efforts. Programs that target the larger environment and the broader student body, rather than solely student-athletes, support all students in healthy choices. Collaboration between the athletics department and other campus departments involved in alcohol education is a vital element of that environment and provides athletics departments with support for education efforts delivered to student-athletes and coaches.



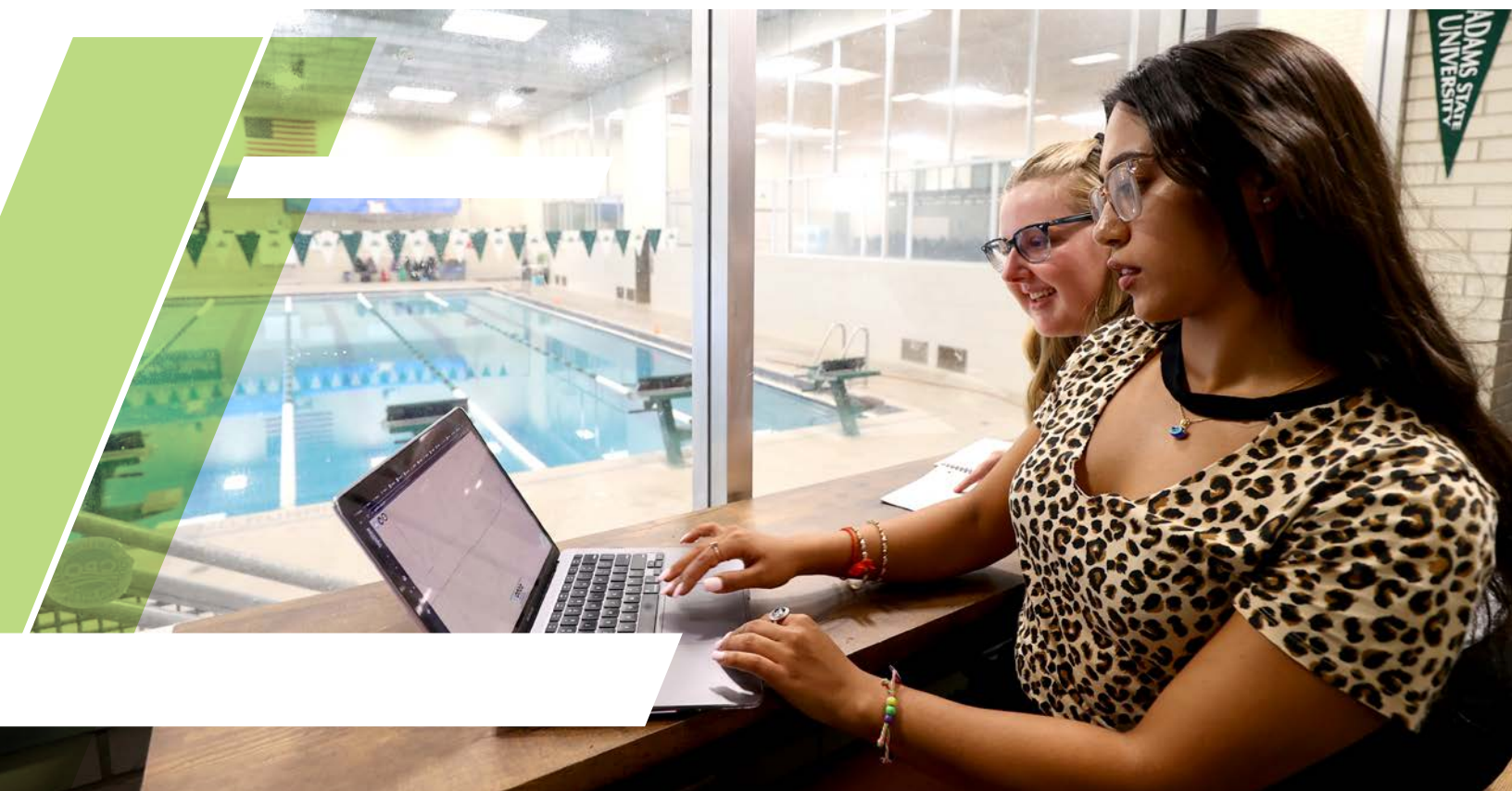
Promoting a Culture of Prevention in Athletics

There is a growing evidence base for effective programs that prevent substance misuse by college student-athletes, and athletics staff are increasingly aware of the importance of implementing evidence-based programs. This is a critical step toward the development of a “culture of prevention,” an indicator that athletics departments have adopted a guiding philosophy to address student-athlete substance use by implementing a preventative, rather than a reactive, approach.

A culture of prevention in college athletics is supported by solid structural foundations, including supportive alcohol and drug policies; adoption and implementation of programs supported by scientific evidence; coordination of prevention efforts with appropriate campus resources/organizations; training intended to engage student-athletes, staff and coaches; and commitment to providing adequate resources (for example, funding) and to sustaining the system in the long term. The primary goal of the college athletics department in this respect is to move toward a culture of prevention by increasing its readiness to engage with campus efforts to implement novel, evidence-based, creative and comprehensive programs.

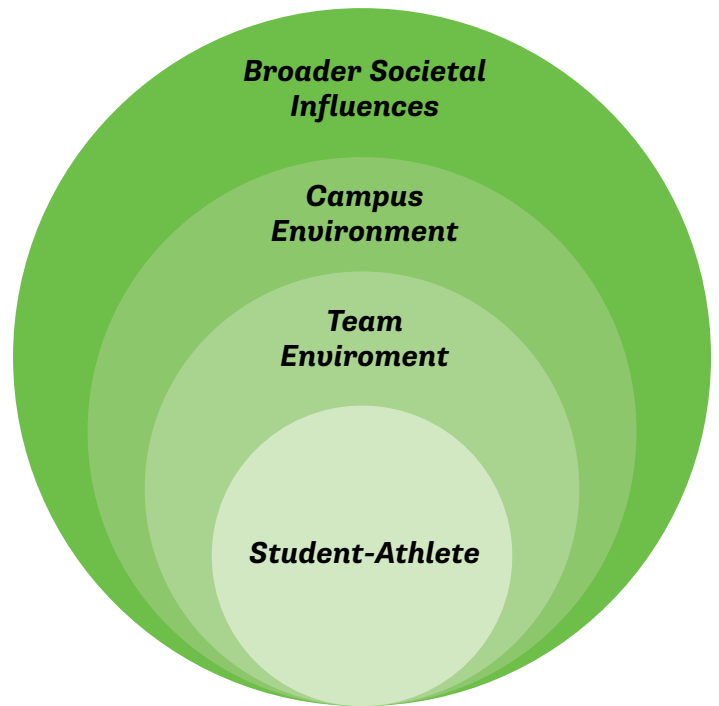
Successful prevention programs aimed at decreasing student-athlete substance misuse and related consequences share critical key principles that should frame athletics department efforts. Substance misuse prevention programs should be:

- **Comprehensive:** Efforts should consist of multiple components in multiple settings to address relevant risk and protective factors. Cohesive strategies should include consistent messaging and reinforce consistent standards and norms across multiple levels and contexts (for example, team meetings, practice, large groups, media and community-wide messaging).
- **Repeated:** Programming should engage student-athletes repeatedly over time. One-time programs or sessions are rarely effective for changing behavior. Research shows that the benefits to prevention programs diminish without follow-up programming.
- **Relevant:** Programming should be relevant and appropriate to the athletics culture and practices.



- **Collaborative:** Programming should be developed or selected in collaboration with relevant prevention and health promotion practitioners, key stakeholders and leaders in the athletics and campus community.
- **Promoting positive relationships:** Programming should foster strong, stable, positive relationships (for example, between coaches and student-athletes).
- **Evidence-based:** Program strategies should have scientific or logical rationale. Prevention programs should be designed to enhance protective factors and reverse or reduce risk factors.
- **Emphasized:** Student-athletes, coaches, etc., should be exposed to enough of the programming for it to have the desired effect of decreasing student-athlete substance misuse.
- **Appropriately timed:** Program activities should happen at a time (for example, beginning of the academic year or before the sport season) that can have maximum impact in a participant's life (for example, student-athlete, coach, athletics administrator, parent).
- **Outcome evaluated:** Substance misuse prevention programming should be evaluated consistently to assess both the effectiveness of specific program components and the overall impact over time.

The socio-ecological model of behavior change demonstrates the relationship between individual behaviors and influences in the surrounding environment. Impacting individual behaviors requires attention to the team dynamics, departmental environment and policies, and those elements within the community in which individuals socialize. An adaptation of this model for collegiate athletics is illustrated to the right.





Checklists for Comprehensive Substance Misuse and Prevention

The Coalition of Higher Education Associations for Substance Misuse Prevention has endorsed a comprehensive approach to alcohol and other drug prevention. For athletics, this approach comprises the following strategies:

1. Student-athlete needs assessment and data analysis.
2. Campus resource inventory.
3. Departmental policy review and dissemination.
4. Collaboration and compliance.
5. Evidence-based educational programming.
6. Student-athlete engagement.

7. Coach engagement.
8. Faculty engagement.
9. Screening, early intervention and referral protocols.
10. Treatment services and recovery support.

The following checklists provide athletics administrators with tools to guide their efforts in addressing substance misuse prevention, intervention and treatment. It is recommended that these checklists be shared with senior student-affairs officers, and those who work closely with prevention staff, to support athletics department efforts and those of the campus.

1

Student-Athlete Needs Assessment and Data Analysis

Assessment helps define the needs of the target audience and determines what strategies and approaches are indicated to decrease alcohol and other substance misuse on and around campus. Athletics departments can conduct their own surveys, look to broader campus survey information or rely on national data to better understand student substance use.

- ☐ Survey student-athletes on alcohol, tobacco and other substance use.
- ☐ Share the summary of substance use with senior staff and campus prevention services to direct next steps in prevention programming.
- ☐ Continuous improvement strategies could consider student-athlete experiences with accessing and utilizing mental health services, while being mindful of student-athlete privacy.

Sources of assessment and evaluation data may include:

- The NCAA Student-Athlete Substance Use and the NCAA Health and Wellness Studies provide nationally representative data by division, sport and gender on substance use and motivation. Institutions that do not conduct institutional surveys can look to this data to understand trends in student-athlete substance use.
- The Core Survey to identify student perceptions, attitudes and behaviors relative to alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and a variety of other substances.
- The American College Health Association's National College Health Assessment examines student attitudes, perceptions and behavior relative to alcohol and other drugs, stress, anxiety, depression, sexual behavior, suicidal ideation, violence and safety.
- Campus police and judicial reports, hospital transports, etc.

2

Campus Resource Inventory

Institutions of higher education are required by the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act to closely examine their prevention efforts on a biennial basis, called the Biennial Review. This review helps campuses to identify strengths, challenges and gaps in their prevention programming. Athletics departments can partner with campus prevention departments both to provide information for the Biennial Review and to benefit from efforts to assess what types of services are available to athletics and student-athletes.

- ☐ Cooperate with campus efforts to conduct environmental audits to help identify campus-wide efforts that support substance use education, assessment, early intervention and gaps in policy, comprehensive programming and resources.

3

Departmental Policy Review and Dissemination

Policy review ensures clear and appropriate guidelines for substance use that are widely disseminated and consistently followed. Senior staff should be provided a copy of the social drug use policy and the prevention plan to gain their support and endorsement. A full review should be conducted through a legal, budgetary and societal lens to allow for full vetting, buy-in and implementation.

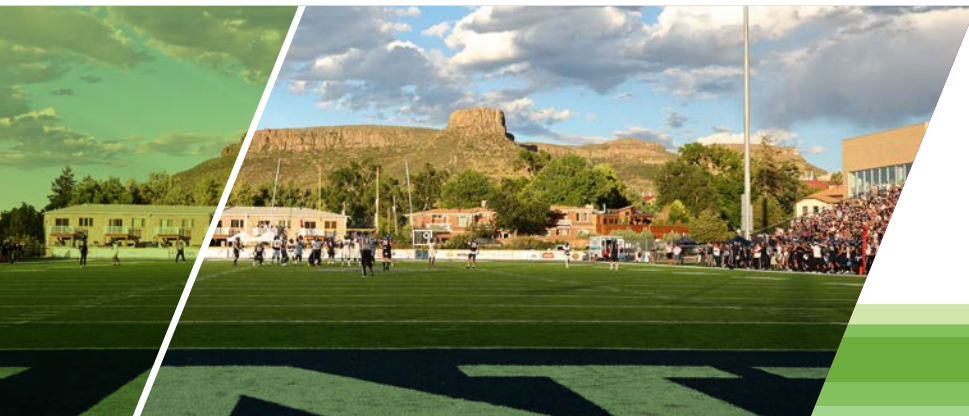
- ☐ Conduct an annual athletics department policy review to ensure that policies:
 - Are in line with the institution's vision, mission and values.
 - Address the needs and responsibilities of student-athletes, staff and coaches.
 - Include guidance from primary athletics health care providers (team physicians and athletic trainers) for best practices in therapeutic pain management.
- ☐ Include senior staff, legal counsel, primary athletics health care providers, student-athlete representatives and faculty athletics representatives in policy review.
- ☐ Disseminate and clearly communicate institution, department and team policy for transparency and compliance.

4

Collaboration and Compliance

Campus partnerships increase buy-in, provide expertise and coordinate prevention messages, programming and services.

- ☐ Connect with campus prevention services to ensure that institutional policy information is shared with athletics.
- ☐ Support campus and community alliances that bring together diverse individuals, agencies and associations to collaborate and share responsibilities for developing communities and environments that encourage lower risk alcohol and other substance use.
- ☐ Assign athletics representatives to campus coalitions/task forces.
- ☐ Communicate athletics policies, programs and needs to the Faculty Senate through the faculty athletics representative.
- ☐ Work closely with primary athletics health care providers to ensure appropriate pain management.



5

Evidence-Based Educational Programming

Educational programs should have evidence of intended impact that meets the objectives identified through the needs assessment, and should address those factors that increase risk for student-athletes, including but not limited to drinking games, pregameing (drinking before social events), celebrations, injury and other stressors.

- ☐ Implement educational programs that have been evaluated for effectiveness.

Effective educational programming includes the following elements:

- Increases student-athletes' knowledge regarding the effects and potential safety, health, social, academic and legal consequences of alcohol and other symptoms of problematic alcohol and other substance use.
- Increases awareness regarding the signs and symptoms of alcohol and other substance misuse and dependency.
- Assists student-athletes in evaluating their expectations regarding, and motivations for, high-risk drinking and other substance use.
- Provides training in stress management, resistance skills and media literacy.
- Defines and encourages lower-risk drinking.
- Assists student-athletes in exploring alternatives to drinking and other substance use for socializing, destressing and celebrating.
- Assists student-athletes in knowing how to help someone with signs of problematic substance use.
- Corrects misperception regarding norms for alcohol and other drug use at their school.
- Provides student-athletes with information about campus and community alcohol and other substance prevention, student assistance, and wellness and health promotion resources.

6

Student-Athlete Engagement

Student-athletes should be included in the process of planning, implementing and evaluating alcohol and substance use prevention strategies. Faculty, staff and others should empower and encourage student-athletes to become advocates for lower-risk alcohol use and should support student-led prevention initiatives.

- ☐ Support the establishment/advancement of peer education/mentoring programs to engage student-athletes in supporting healthy behaviors.
- ☐ Implement bystander intervention training so student-athletes can intervene safely and effectively in cases of pending danger or distress.
- ☐ Engage student organizations as partners in prevention.

7

Coach Engagement

Coaches play an important role in the team culture, and coaches need information and guidance to effectively support team and departmental policies that promote and reinforce healthy student-athlete behaviors.

- ☐ Include coaches in substance misuse educational programs for student-athletes.
- ☐ Hold an all-coaches meeting to discuss institutional policies and best practices.
- ☐ Offer coaches education and resources related to substance misuse and substance misuse prevention.
- ☐ Provide coaches with training on how to identify a substance misuse concern and make a referral for intervention.

8

Faculty Engagement

Faculty serve as an important link to resources and services for students who may have problematic alcohol or substance misuse. Faculty can:

- Incorporate alcohol and drug prevention education into the classroom.
 - Include a prevention statement on class syllabi.
 - Include alcohol and other substance misuse prevention messaging in course content.
 - Provide expertise needed to develop alcohol and substance misuse prevention programs, including evaluation of such.
- ☐ Include a faculty athletics representative in policy review and dissemination, integration of substance misuse education and the broader discussion among faculty and campus staff.
 - ☐ Provide faculty training on how to identify a substance misuse concern and make a referral for intervention.



9

Screening, Early Intervention and Referral Protocols

Screening facilitates early identification of problematic substance use and more successful intervention and positive outcomes for student-athlete health, well-being and performance. Screening may occur in multiple forms and serves to identify student-athletes who may benefit from referral for further support and resources, including referral to licensed providers.

- ☐ Consider incorporating annual substance misuse screening into annual screening recommendations outlined in the [Mental Health Best Practices](#).
- ☐ Partner with campus screening events. Broader campus screening programs can be used to educate groups and provide indications for further screening. Individual screening sessions are confidential, face-to-face sessions with professionals to provide further exploration of indicated concerns. Clinical providers will determine an appropriate level of care based on the student's individual needs.
- ☐ Collaborate with primary athletics health care providers and campus experts to consider the use of established screening tools/programs and effective referrals.
- ☐ Incorporate substance misuse into routine and emergency Mental Health Action Plans, which should be written and rehearsed plans that outline routine and emergency mental health referral pathways, per the Mental Health Best Practices.

10

Treatment Services and Recovery Support

Student-athlete health is best served by engaging the full complement of available resources, which can include resources within campus health and counseling services and within the surrounding community. Identifying the resources that are available and establishing and sustaining strong professional working relationships are critical elements for ensuring an appropriate response to student-athletes' needs.

- ☐ Incorporate campus and community-based treatment information in student-athlete resource information.
- ☐ Explore and support campus-based programs for student-athletes in recovery.

Resources for Consideration

Additional resources for consideration in support of Substance Misuse Prevention and Intervention:

An Athletics Tool Kit can be found online using the QR code below or by visiting

ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/ssi/substance/SSI_SubstanceMisusePreventionToolKit.pdf.



Strategic Action Plan

Use this worksheet to plan next steps and identify potential campus collaborators and how you will engage with them.

Consider these questions as you plan your outreach:

- How can you find out about evidence-based strategies to address substance misuse?
- What other student groups on campus face similar issues as student-athletes?
- What types of substance-free events are being offered through your campus activities office?

ACTIONS	POINT PERSON	WHAT TASKS ARE EACH RESPONSIBLE FOR?	BY WHAT DATE	WHAT OUTCOME?	HOW WILL THEY BE MEASURED?
CREATE A PREVENTION TEAM, INCLUDING: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Senior athletics administrator 2. Student-Athlete Advisory Committee 3. Sports medicine 4. Legal 5. Student health and wellness 6. Counseling and psychological services 7. Student government 8. Faculty 9. Dean responsible for student conduct 10. Other 					
SCHEDULE MEETINGS THROUGH THE YEAR					
CONDUCT NEEDS ASSESSMENT <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student-athletes 2. Staff 3. Coaches 					
DRAFT DEPARTMENTAL PROTOCOLS FOR RESPONSE/REFERRAL					

ACTIONS	POINT PERSON	WHAT TASKS ARE EACH RESPONSIBLE FOR?	BY WHAT DATE	WHAT OUTCOME?	HOW WILL THEY BE MEASURED?
IDENTIFY/CREATE A CALENDAR OF CAMPUS PREVENTION/ HEALTH PROMOTION PROGRAMS AND SCHEDULED EVENTS					
IDENTIFY/SELECT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING FOR: 1. Student-athletes 2. Staff 3. Coaches PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS: 1. Alcohol and other substance misuse 2. Peer-to-peer intervention 3. Coaches' and staff roles 4. Etc.					
CREATE PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REVIEW FOR ADJUSTMENTS TO PLAN FOR NEXT YEAR					
CREATE REPORTS OF EXPERIENCE/SUCCESS TO HELP DEFINE ELEMENTS OF NEXT YEAR'S PLAN					
SCHEDULE BRIEFING WITH SENIOR STAFF					
OTHER					