

Athletic activity increases the potential for medical emergencies. The best way school districts can be prepared is to develop, document, and implement an Emergency Action Plan (EAP). The following guidelines are not all-inclusive but are the first steps guiding districts to create and/or review their athletics emergency planning.

### **Create a Team**

Develop a district-wide team with key players, including: school administrators, first responders, school security, Educational Service District School Nurse Corps Coordinator, and consulting physicians from the community. Your coaches and athletic trainers are also important invitees. Designate an EAP coordinator who can facilitate meetings, coordinate district staff, and work with outside entities.

### **Identify Venues**

Identify in writing the individual venues for school athletic activities, including those on campus and off, such as: golf courses, cross-country trails and community football stadiums. Consider venues for both games and practices.

### **Identify Probable Emergencies**

Each activity has specific types of injuries that are more prevalent. Identify the probable types of emergencies that could occur at each venue and plan the types of equipment and procedures required. In your planning, consider emergencies that may also arise among spectators and non-students.

### **Document the Plan**

As a team, develop a comprehensive EAP that will address situations that could occur on the first day of practice through the last game, whether home or away. The main component of the plan should identify the assignment of specific duties to school and emergency response personnel. Next, highlight the individual needs of each specific venue.

Identify:

- Types of potential injuries
- Emergency services access
- Location of defibrillation equipment and other medical supplies
- A protocol for injury evaluation
- Emergency transport needs
- Communication plan
- Incident documentation

Communication is an important element. Establishing routes of efficient communication for each venue is critical. Emergency first responders need to be identified for every location. Plan how to provide first responders access to the facility and the best way to share with them the specific location of the victim. Post a copy of the EAP identifying first responders, emergency numbers, the local address, and specific directions for each venue in an easily viewable location. Share with staff where it is posted.

Documentation protocols need to be highlighted in the plan. Staff must have access to checklists and incident reports during and immediately after an event so that facts and information are not lost or forgotten. The plan should remind staff to complete and submit incident reports. Review with staff issues of privacy and confidentiality.

### **Emergency Equipment**

Determine what emergency equipment needs to be at each venue or location. Consider the probable types of injuries and emergencies that could occur. Create a way to confirm that this equipment is on-site, accessible, and regularly maintained. Determine who is responsible for checking equipment readiness. Provide an inspection schedule and a means of documenting inspection/maintenance before each scheduled athletic activity.

### **Defibrillators**

Team physicians and first responders will play an important part in determining how to best provide access to defibrillation equipment in the event of cardiac arrest. Include those who will be trained to respond to a sudden cardiac arrest event in the EAP. First responders may include athletic trainers, coaches, school nurses, team physicians, or community emergency service providers. Determine who is responsible for personnel training, required documentation, and automated external defibrillator (AED) placement and maintenance if required. Remember that AED(s) should be placed centrally or on-site if the collapse-to-shock time interval for conventional EMS is estimated to be greater than 5 minutes. Additional equipment for use with an AED includes scissors, a razor, a towel, and possibly an extra set of AED pads.

AEDs should be well-marked with signage and publicly accessible. AEDs should never be locked behind a door or require a key to access it.

If AEDs are installed or moved, EMS dispatch centers and first responding agencies should be notified of the type of equipment, its exact location on school grounds, and if staff on-site are trained to use the equipment.

### **Emergency Transportation:**

Consider each venue and its specific layout. Determine access routes for ambulances to enter and exit and how best to facilitate access to the victim for arriving EMS personnel. Most high-risk activities have an on-site ambulance during an event. Still, there needs to be a contingency plan in case the emergency vehicle has been called away, or there is an emergency that requires additional responders. Consider how medical coverage will be provided at the athletic event if the on-site medical staff accompany an athlete to the hospital. Identify the location of the medical facility that the injured party will be transported to for each venue. It is vital to make the facility name, address, emergency contact information, and driving directions accessible so that staff can follow in a private car.

### **Drills and Practice:**

An extremely important step is practicing the EAP protocol for each venue, including a review of the exercises once completed so that they can be changed, tweaked, or altered if necessary. Rehearse the EAP before implementing and at least annually thereafter with all players involved, including athletic trainers, student athletic trainers, team and consulting physicians, school nurses, coaches, campus public safety officials, and other targeted responders. Practice mock drills, simulating sudden cardiac arrests and traumatic injuries. These simulations are valuable in determining if there are any missing components or changes that need to be made.

### **Post-Event Catastrophic Incident Guidelines**

Establish a contact list of individuals to be notified in the case of a catastrophic event. This list may include administration, WSRMP, and a spokesperson for the district to handle all media and

parent/community inquiries. Develop a list of local counselors and other crisis workers who can be a resource for staff and students who may have been impacted.

Have the EAP planning team reconvene to discuss events and responses after an emergency. This meeting should occur within 72 hours of an event for best results so witnesses and participants can still clearly recollect facts and circumstances. This meeting serves to help fine-tune and identify components in the EAP that may need to be changed and to recognize pieces that worked well.

The [National Athletic Trainers' Association](#) has additional guidance for EAPs, including an [Emergency Action Plan White Paper](#) and [Emergency Action Plan Guidelines: Mental Health Emergency in Secondary School Athletes](#).

For questions about these recommendations, please contact our Risk Services Department at 206-394-9737 or [riskservices@wsrmp.com](mailto:riskservices@wsrmp.com).