This companion to the NCAA Mental Health Handbook is intended to provide you an outline and reference to educate others on your campus — coaches, administrators, advisors — about this important issue in addressing student-athlete health and safety. As you engage others in these discussions, emphasize the importance of recognizing that student-athlete mental health issues are sensitive, private and confidential, and every effort should be made in these discussions to protect the confidentiality of any student-athlete or staff.

We encourage you to engage your audience by asking questions with each slide throughout the presentation; by asking questions, you will better understand what types of issues staff are dealing with, and others will have an opportunity to share from their experience. We will provide some questions you might consider using, and cite references from the handbook to identify information you want to emphasize; familiarize yourself with this information so that you feel comfortable facilitating the discussions.

You may consider using the case illustrations in the handbook for examples to highlight concerns. You might also look for examples in the media.

If you or your audience uses real-life examples, emphasize again the importance of maintaining confidentiality. We recommend that you not use any identifying information about any of your student-athletes.
Managing Student-Athletes' Mental Health Issues

Agenda

• Introduction to Mental Health
• Mood Disorders
• Anxiety Disorders
• Eating Disorders
• Substance-Related Disorders
• Management and Referrals
• Resources

NCAA.org/health-safety
Managing Student-Athletes' Mental Health Issues

**Why is this important?**

- Why should coaches and administrators be educated about student-athlete mental health?
- What can coaches and administrators do?

These questions can be posed to your audience to start the discussion; allow for a good amount of time so that your audience can contribute to laying the groundwork for the rest of the presentation.

This can be followed by either a case illustration, or showing “Nathan’s Story”(http://web1.ncaa.org/web_video/health_and_safety/NathansStory/index.html)

In order to show “Nathan’s Story”, you will need a connection to the Internet.

“Nathan’s Story” runs about 8 minutes.

Following this presentation, ask your audience if this story reminds them of any other student-athletes they’ve known who had similar struggles. What signs should coaches and administrators look for?

You can also add to the discussion by presenting some of the bullets from page 3.
What factors increase risk of mental health problems for student-athletes?

- Age

- Transition time
  - from home to college
  - ending of relationships

- Stress increases
  - performance
  - health habits
  - Academic Performance

Ask your audience to think about factors that could increase risk and why; fade in the information in the slide after they have a chance to respond.

See information on p. 3.
Managing Student-Athletes' Mental Health Issues

General signs and symptoms

- Behavioral
- Cognitive
- Emotional
- Physical/medical

Ask your audience to recall any behaviors of student-athletes that concerned them, and share with the group.

Share the symptoms under each grouping, see p. 4. Remind your audience that any one sign or symptom does not confirm a mental health problem, but the need to consider making a referral increases as the number of signs increases. Noticing and making a referral are their primary responsibilities.
Mood Disorders

An important part of a mood disorder assessment and management plan is whether the student-athlete should continue sport participation.
Managing Student-Athletes' Mental Health Issues

Depression

- Incidence
- Signs and symptoms
- Effects on health and performance
- Management

Ask these questions and let the audience contribute before providing information from the handbook:

How common do you think depression is within this age group? P. 5

What are the signs and symptoms of depression? P. 5

What effects can depression have on athletic performance and on health? P. 6

What should you, as a coach or administrator, do to help a student-athlete who may be depressed?

Refer to page 6 for a case illustration (green box). Ask what they would do?

Refer to page 7 to emphasize the difficulty in identifying depression (blue box).
Suicide Intervention

If a student-athlete:

- expresses a suicidal thought,
- indicates an intent or plan, or
- makes a suicide attempt . . .

MAKE AN IMMEDIATE REFERRAL

In advance, identify your local suicide hotline – you can do this by contacting your counseling center on campus. Call the hotline and introduce yourself and confirm the process to follow when a student-athlete may be suicidal.

See the blue box on P. 11, and share the bullets with your audience.

Ask your audience to help identify local resources. Share with them the hotline information you confirmed.
Anxiety Disorders

Return to competition decisions should be solely based on what is in the student-athlete’s best interest.

NCAA.org/health-safety
Managing Student-Athletes' Mental Health Issues

Anxiety Disorders

- Incidence
- Signs and symptoms
- Effects on health and performance
- Management

Ask these questions and let the audience contribute before providing information from the handbook:

How common do you think anxiety is in athletes, and is it different than being stressed out? P. 13; P. 16

Note the different types of anxiety - - generalized, panic attacks, obsessive compulsive, phobias. P 14-15

What symptoms would you see in someone with anxiety? P. 14

How does anxiety affect health and performance? P. 15

What can you as a coach or administrator do for a student-athlete exhibiting anxiety? P. 17-18.

Has anyone had an anxious student-athlete, and how has that affected the team?
Disordered Eating & Eating Disorders

Usually it is better to approach them with general concerns for their health rather than directly confronting them with evidence of disordered eating symptoms.
Disordered Eating & Eating Disorders

- Incidence
- Signs and symptoms
- Effects on health and performance
- Management

Ask these questions and let the audience contribute before providing information from the handbook:

How common do you think eating disorders are in athletes? Is an eating disorder simply a result of not eating enough? P. 19
How does “disordered eating” relate to eating disorders? Mention dieting. P. 20

Note the different types of eating disorders - - anorexia, bulimia, EDNOS, binge disorders. P. 20-21

How do eating disorders affect performance? P. 21
Can a student-athlete with an eating disorder still participate in sport? P. 22

What can you as a coach or administrator do for a student-athlete exhibiting an eating disorder? P. 23.
Also, see “Managing the Female Athlete Triad on the www.ncaa.org/health-safety Website..

How has a student-athlete with an eating disorder affected the team?
Managing Student-Athletes' Mental Health Issues

Substance Abuse

- Incidence
- Signs and symptoms
- Effects on health and performance
- Management

Ask these questions and let the audience contribute before providing information from the handbook; responses will depend on the substance in question, i.e., alcohol, stimulants, marijuana, and steroids.

What substances are you most concerned about?
Is substance use the same as abuse?
What is the most commonly used legal substance, illegal substance? P. 26

What are some signs of substance abuse? P. 26, 28, 29, 30

How does substance abuse affect performance? P. 25, 28, 29. Also see the NCAA Drug Policy Brochure and the pamphlet “For the Athlete – Alcohol and Performance, both located at www.ncaa.org/health-safety, under “Education and Wellness”.

What can you as a coach or administrator do for a student-athlete exhibiting signs of substance abuse? P. 31.

How has substance abuse affected the team?
Managing Student-Athletes' Mental Health Issues

Student-Athlete Approaches You

- Approach indicates a need to talk.
- Give your total attention, look at the person.
- LISTEN.
- Ask questions only for clarification without judgment.
- Indicate you want to help.
- Ask if there is anything he/she needs.
- Make a referral.

Prior to your presentation, identify campus and community resources, including contact information. Remember to include after-hours contacts, such as the ER at the local hospital.

Ask your audience members to share ways they have created an environment and a process that invites student-athletes to come to them with a problem.

Review the recommendations above, and ask if there are other things the audience would recommend, as well as anything they have learned to avoid or know does not work.

Ask your audience to think about the resources available on your campus and in your community, and to share any insights into the best ways to work with those resources to help a student-athlete in distress. Ask them to share experiences making referrals. This may also raise some concerns someone may have experienced while making a referral. This can be discussed within the group, and also provide an opportunity for collegial follow-up.

Emphasize the importance of making personal connections with campus counseling and health services so that in the event you need to contact them, you and they will have a better understanding of each others’ needs and constraints.
Managing Student-Athletes' Mental Health Issues

Treatment Expectations

*Healthcare practitioners are legally and ethically required to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of their patients.*

*They cannot divulge any information about their patients to anyone (even the patient’s parents) without the patient’s written consent.*

What questions should you, as a coach, ask your sports medicine care provider about the treatments.

What can I do to help the student-athlete?
Should the student-athlete be training?
Should the student-athlete be competing?
How long do you expect them to be out of training/competition?
What type of updates can I expect?
Should I consider processing a medical hardship waiver?
Will this impact their academic standing?
Managing Student-Athletes' Mental Health Issues

Know your limits

- Be aware of what is reasonable to expect from yourself.
- Know that you have limited control over others' behaviors.
- Your responsibility is to recognize and refer.
- Turn the problem over to someone else when you begin to feel undue stress or worry.

Ask your audience:

Who can you, as a coach/administrator, talk to if you’re feeling the problem is beyond your ability to address, (i.e., too big, too emotional, too stressful, or you are getting too personally involved)?

RE-Emphasize that the role of the coach/administrator is to notice signs, communicate concerns to the student-athlete, and help the student-athlete get to the appropriate source for assistance.

Review the points in the slide.

Ask your audience if they can identify why health-care practitioners may not divulge patient diagnosis or treatment information.

Reiterate the purpose of confidentiality. P. 39

Ask if audience can share ways they have met their need to know that a student-athlete is following up on a problem, while protecting confidentiality.
Final thoughts

- Treatment works.
- Coaches and administrators can provide encouragement and support.
- Addressing mental health issues is important for both performance and health, and demonstrates to student-athletes that you care about them as a person.

Ask for any final comments that may help everyone in the room better serve the mental health needs of student-athletes.