


Office of School Support and Well-Being
Department of Athletics
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

July 2023

MEMORANDUM

To: Athletic Coaches, Athletics Specialists, and Athletic Trainers

From:  Jeffrey K. Sullivan, Director, Systemwide Athletics, 240-740-5650

Subject: Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Coach Health and Safety Expectations

The following is a summary of specific health and safety-related areas of responsibility for coaches, athletics specialists, and athletic trainers. All of these items are available on the Health/Safety section of the MCPS Athletics web page. Health and safety protocols and procedures are evaluated on an ongoing basis by the Student-Athlete Medical Advisory Committee for MCPS Athletics, under the leadership of Mr. Shawn Hendi, health and safety coordinator.

1. Sports Medicine Program

MCPS is launching an enhanced sports medicine program beginning with the 2023-24 school year that includes a health and safety coordinator in the systemwide department of athletics, along with a full-time athletic trainer in each comprehensive high school. Additionally, MCPS has partnered with MedStar Health, the region's largest sports medicine provider, to provide supplemental resources and services to schools.

2. Athletic Trainers

As part of the enhanced sports medicine program, a full-time certified athletic trainer is assigned to each MCPS high school. School-assigned athletic trainers are now MCPS employees and will operate under the direction of the health and safety coordinator and the supervision of the school principal and athletics specialist. MedStar will employ five roving athletic trainers to assist with care, when gaps in coverage arise.

3. Summary of Health and Safety Related Forms and Documents

A document entitled *Required Safety-Related Forms, Documents, and Courses* lists all of the required MCPS safety-related forms, documents, and courses that concern coaches, athletics specialists, athletic trainers, student-athletes, and parents/guardians.

4. Student-Athlete Health and Safety PowerPoint

An important responsibility of athletic trainers and coaches is educating student-athletes and parents/guardians regarding certain health and safety concerns. To assist, MCPS utilizes a [Student-Athlete Health and Safety PowerPoint](#) that covers many of the important health and safety initiatives. Athletic trainers and coaches should present this PowerPoint to student-athletes on or before the first day of practice or prior to the first scrimmage.

Coaches also are expected to review health and safety information with parents/guardians at mandatory preseason team meetings, as well as review information regarding the promotion of a positive culture and the harmful effects of bullying, harassment, and hazing with students on or

before the first day of practice or prior to the first scrimmage. Parents and student-athletes must indicate during the online registration process for athletics that they have reviewed health and safety information made available by the school system, including information in the Athletics section of the MCPS website.

5. COVID-19

Relevant information regarding COVID-19 is included in the [Return to R.A.I.S.E. Plan](#), which is available on the Health and Safety web page.

6. Mental Health

MCPS Athletics is committed to the mental health and well-being of student-athletes and athletic department personnel. Mental health information is included in the Preseason Student-Athlete Health and Safety Presentation and additional resources are available on the Health and Safety webpage for MCPS Athletics. Coaches and athletic department personnel are encouraged to utilize these resources to promote mental health and well-being across the MCPS athletics program.

7. Supervision of Student-Athletes

Coaches are expected to reasonably supervise student-athletes at all times, before and after practices and contests at both home and away sites. Using the *MCPS Supervision Action Plan* as a guide, coaches are expected to complete the *MCPS Supervision Template* prior to the season and submit the plan to the athletics specialist for approval, along with securing approval from the security team leader and principal.

8. Hazing & the Promotion of a Positive Culture

Coaches should address hazing and the promotion of a positive culture with student-athletes on or before the first day of practice. Coaches shall take immediate action if hazing occurs or is suspected. Hazing is addressed in the *MCPS High School Athletics Handbook* and additional resources are available on the MCPS Athletics web page. Finally, all student-athletes will complete the *MCPS Culture of Respect* training, offered annually to all secondary students.

9. Emergency Action Plan

Each school shall have a venue-specific emergency action plan that includes guidelines and procedures associated with heat acclimatization, heat-related emergencies, and responding to severe injuries. Knowing what to do and following specific protocols could minimize potentially catastrophic injuries. Plans should include recognition of heat illness and immediate emergency actions. Local school athletic trainers shall be consulted during the generation of the emergency plan. Finalized plans are available on the school's website, submitted to the health and safety coordinator, and need to be communicated to student-athletes and parents/guardians. Led by the athletic trainer, plans shall be rehearsed in-person and interactively by all members of the coaching staff of each sport before each season.

10. Concussions/Head Injuries

MCPS guidelines and procedures regarding head injuries are described in the document [MCPS Concussion Plan](#). Student-athletes and parents/guardians are required to indicate during the online registration process that they have reviewed specific information regarding concussions prior to participation. Schools must monitor a graduated return-to-play protocol for student-athletes who have suffered concussions.

Baseline Concussion Testing

Students are encouraged to complete a baseline concussion test once, prior to their initial participation in the MCPS interscholastic athletics program. While optional, baseline tests should be administered prior to students participating in their first scrimmage or contest.

Details regarding baseline concussion testing are described in the documents [Baseline Testing Plan](#) and [Baseline Testing Information for Parents](#). Student-athletes must complete the online registration process for athletics prior to testing.

11. Hydration

Hydration is a critical component to the health and performance of student-athletes. Coaches are asked to emphasize the importance of proper hydration and to provide appropriate opportunities for student-athletes to hydrate during practices and contests. Coaches are expected to review and implement protocols and procedures contained in the [MCPS Fall Heat Plan](#). Additional resources are available on the [Heat and Hydration](#) page of the MCPS Athletics website.

12. Temperature Guidelines

Temperature guidelines are included in the *MCPS High School Athletics Handbook* and available on the MCPS Athletics website on the [Heat Index](#) page. Guidelines include four codes – green, gold, orange, and red – based on the current weather conditions of 20877.

13. MRSA (Methicillin-Resistant Staph Aureus) Information

Athletic trainers and coaches are asked to review fundamental information regarding skin infections and the importance of diligent hygiene. Inappropriate hygiene and inappropriate attention to wounds may lead to MRSA. Included in the coach's review should be the MCPS documents entitled:

- *Updated MRSA Recommendations for Schools and School Communities*; and
- *Fundamental Precautions Regarding Communicable Infections, Including MRSA*.

Both are contained in the Health/Safety section of the MCPS Athletics web page.

14. Steroids and Performance Enhancing Substances

Athletic trainers and coaches are asked to address with student-athletes the issue of steroids and substances that purport to enhance growth or athletic performance. Coaches should actively discourage the use of such substances and to report instances where they suspect that student-athletes may be taking steroids.

15. Sudden Cardiac Arrest Awareness

Athletic trainers and coaches are asked to address with student-athletes and parents/guardians potential symptoms of sudden cardiac arrest. Student-athletes and parents/guardians must indicate that they are aware of its definition, signs and symptoms, and emergency actions during the online registration process for athletics.

16. Other Health and Safety Areas That Merit Address

Other health and safety areas that are among a coach's responsibilities include the following:

- Social Media – Athletic trainers and coaches should address with student-athletes appropriate use of electronic communications, including social media. Student-athletes should be cautioned about adverse effects associated with inappropriate use of electronic communications as outlined in the [Student-Parent Athletic Participation Contract and Parent Permission Form](#) and the Health and Safety PowerPoint.
- Pre-participation Physical Examination ([MCPS Form SR-8](#)) – Student-athletes must complete a current medical evaluation prior to participation; the physical is valid for thirteen months. The last page of the form – Medical Eligibility Form, will be submitted during the online registration process for athletics. Parents/Guardians also have the option to email the forms to the [local school athletics specialist](#) prior to tryouts/practices. Coaches and athletics specialists should review the information and collaborate with athletic trainers regarding student-athlete health concerns.
- Emergency Medical Card – Student-athletes and parent/guardians complete emergency medical information during the online registration process for athletics. The ParentVue Portal generates electronic Emergency Medical Cards, which are distributed to coaches and must be available at all practices and contests. Copies should also be provided to athletic trainers.
- Field/Facility Inspection – Coaches and athletics specialists should inspect practice and playing facilities for safety concerns. Follow-up should occur on areas of concern.
- Automated External Defibrillator (AED) – Coaches should know the location of the closest AED and make certain that they have access to the unit. Coaches who practice off-campus should have a portable AED available and should test the unit on a weekly basis. Athletic trainers support with administering the AED program.
- Coach Health and Safety Courses/Certification – Every two years, coaches must be recertified in CPR/AED, concussion awareness, heat acclimatization/hydration, and sudden cardiac arrest.
- Additionally, all athletic department personnel must complete annual compliance and safety training, as outlined in MCPS policies and regulations. Coach certification, compliance and eligibility is tracked in the Coach and Athletic Department Certification and Compliance Database (Coaches Database).

I appreciate everyone's professionalism and diligence in implementing these fundamental precautions. If athletic trainers or coaches have any questions regarding health and safety information or expectations, they should contact their school's athletics specialist.

JKS:rtm

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