

# **ON SLOW COUNTY SCHOOLS**

## **ATHLETICS HANDBOOK**

In compliance with federal laws, Onslow County Schools administers all educational programs, employment activities and admissions without discrimination because of race, religion, national or ethnic origin, color, age, military service, disability or gender, except where exemption is appropriate and allowed by law. All Onslow County Schools facilities, both educational and athletic, are tobacco-free learning environments. The Onslow County Schools Board of Education supports the values of sportsmanship, ethics, and integrity while striving to ensure a wholesome, equitable setting so student-athletes in our programs can enjoy the many positive benefits of participation in interscholastic activities.

**MISSION-** The purpose of athletics in the Onslow County Schools is to serve as an extension of the classroom in helping to provide a broad range of educational experiences that aid in the development of favorable habits and attitudes in students that will prepare them for adult life, including physical development, coordination, dedication, self-sacrifice, leadership skills, a healthy self-concept, pride and good sportsmanship. Our athletic programs provide a variety of opportunities for students to learn and demonstrate good sportsmanship practices which have lifelong values. The athlete who acts fairly, who observes rules and customs, who treats others with consideration, and who responds to adversity with dignity earns respect. Students in today's schools are tomorrow's community citizens, and as adults will demonstrate many of the attitudes they are now learning. Our athletic programs provide another avenue for the pursuit of competitive excellence, with the understanding that the pursuit of that excellence is educational in purpose. The prime concern is to develop the student-athlete physically, mentally, socially and emotionally in a positive environment that helps them to pursue the exertion of their best effort, the will to win, commitment to teammates and general conduct that brings credit to their respective schools and communities. All our interscholastic athletic programs shall be conducted in accordance with existing Board of Education policies, rules and regulations. While the Board of Education takes great pride in winning, it does not condone "winning at any cost!" The Board discourages any and all pressures, which might tend to neglect good sportsmanship and good mental health. At all times the athletic program must be conducted in such a way as to justify it as an educational activity.

**PURPOSE** -The purpose of this handbook is to communicate to athletes, parents, coaches, and administrators the philosophies, standards, rules and expectations applicable to participants in the District interscholastic athletic program. The clear understanding and consistent application of these matters will help ensure that student athletes have the best possible experience in their respective athletic programs.

**ASSUMPTION OF RISK** – By its nature, participation in interscholastic athletics involves the risk of possible serious injury, including physical or mental impairments and even death, as well as the risk of transmission of infectious disease such as Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), HIV and Hepatitis B. Although serious injuries are not common and the risk of HIV transmission is almost nonexistent in supervised school athletic programs, it is impossible to eliminate all risk. Participants have a responsibility to help reduce that risk. Participants must obey all safety rules, report all physical and hygiene problems to their coaches, practice proper personal hygiene, inspect their own equipment daily, follow a proper conditioning program and refrain from the use of illegal drugs or controlled substances. Students, parents and guardians should be aware that Sudden Cardiac Arrest is the leading cause of death among student-athletes during exercise in the United States and can only be detected by cardiovascular screening. While every student is required to have a medical exam by a licensed medical professional every 365 days in order to participate in Onslow County Schools' (OCS) athletics programs, these medical exams do not typically include cardiovascular screenings. If a student experiences an injury/illness or change in his/her health status while participating on one of OCS sports teams, it is the responsibility of said student-athlete to inform his/her Head Coach and/or a Certified Athletic Trainer and adhere to the established injury management guidelines, which includes total rehabilitation and reassessments before being released to return to full participation.

Participation in any sport exposes the participant to the risk of concussion. A concussion is an injury to the brain caused by a direct or indirect blow to the head. **All concussions are potentially serious** and may result in complications including prolonged brain damage and death if not recognized and managed properly. Be aware that any student removed from a practice or competition due to a suspected concussion, will be unable to return to participation that day. After that day, written authorization from a physician (M.D. or D.O.) on the required NCHSAA Return to Play form will be required in order for the student to return to participation.

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION**

Students must meet all requirements of athletic participation as established by the North Carolina High School Athletic Association (NCHSAA), the NC Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and the Onslow County Schools Board of Education (OCS). These include, but may not be limited to, the following.

**RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS** - A student must reside with his/her parent or legal custodian within a school's attendance zone or be assigned to the school by the Board of Education. Additionally, a student must be legally enrolled as a full time student at the school and be in regular attendance at that school in order to be eligible to compete in athletics at that school.

### **ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS**

#### **High School**

- student must have passed a minimum course load from the previous semester (at least 3 semester-long courses on block schedule)
- student also MUST be enrolled in at least 3 courses during first semester to be eligible during the second semester
- student cannot turn 19 years of age on or before August 31 of current academic year
- student cannot participate in athletics after completing 8 semesters of high school
- student cannot have participated in more than 4 seasons of any particular sport after initial entry into 9th grade
- student cannot participate after graduating from high school

#### **Middle School**

- student must be in the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade (6<sup>th</sup> graders cannot participate in athletics)
- student must have met local and state promotion standards from the previous grade
- student must have passed a minimum of 4 classes (at least 3 of those must be core courses [Math, Science, Social Studies, Language Arts] plus 1 Encore class) from the previous semester
- student cannot turn 15 years of age on or before August 31 of the current academic year
- student can only compete in athletics for four (4) semesters after first entry into 7<sup>th</sup> grade

**ATTENDANCE** – When determining athletic eligibility any absences from the previous semester verified to be excused/lawful by the student's school will not be considered. Students will forfeit athletic eligibility when unlawful/unexcused absences, out-of-school suspensions, or any combination of unlawful/unexcused absences and out-of-school suspensions during the previous semester exceed ten (10) days. No process will exist to request a waiver of unexcused/unlawful absences or out-of-school suspensions. The NCHSAA Handbook states that "***At the end of each semester, any participant who has failed to meet the PSU attendance policy of that semester is immediately ineligible.***" Furthermore, the NCHSAA Handbook states that "***A student not academically eligible at the beginning of the semester is not eligible at any time during that semester.***" In accordance with this rule, any absences that exceed the ten unexcused allowable for athletic participation must be excused prior to the end of the current semester in order for a student to be eligible for athletics in the following semester. We cannot accept notes excusing absences after the final day of the semester for the purposes of athletic participation. It is strongly recommended that a student must be in attendance at least ½ the school day to be eligible to practice with their team, take part in any team activity, or participate in an athletic event on that day. Exceptions should be approved **in advance** by the Athletic Director or Principal of the school.

**STUDENT TRANSFERS** - After initial entry into the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and absent a bona fide move as described by the NCHSAA:

- Students who transfer from one high school in the Onslow County Schools system to another high school within the county must sit out for 365 days for athletic participation. Students who change schools through the controlled enrollment process shall be immediately eligible for athletic participation.
- Students who transfer to Onslow County Schools from another LEA (to include charter schools, private schools, home schools, etc.) must sit out 365 days for athletic participation. Exceptions for immediate athletic eligibility for transfers from an LEA outside of the Onslow County Schools system will be heard by a special NCHSAA transfer committee.

**ONSLow VIRTUAL SCHOOL STUDENTS** – Students enrolled in the Onslow Virtual School, as well as students enrolled in the Onslow Early College, are NOT eligible to participate in athletics.

**HOMESCHOOL PARTICIPATION** - A home school student can become eligible to participate in athletics at the high school level in Onslow County Schools, but only if (1) their domicile is located within the administrative boundaries of Onslow County Schools and (2) the home school student must become dual enrolled by enrolling in Onslow County Schools following the enrollment and assignment procedures/policies established by the Onslow County Board of Education (Policy 3102). Dual enrolled home school students may only participate in athletics at the high school located within the attendance zone where their domicile or unit of residence is located (cannot request out-of-district placement). Additionally, home school students must notify the Principal or Principal's designee of their intent to try out for an athletic team at least ten days prior to the first practice date of the sport season they wish to participate in, using the online submission form which can be found at <https://www.onslow.k12.nc.us/Page/28398>

**INSURANCE** – Any student who participates in any interscholastic athletic program in Onslow County Schools is required to be covered by student accident insurance or parent/ guardian/ legal custodian must sign an Insurance Waiver indicating that the student is covered by adequate personal health and hospitalization insurance and provide the name and policy number of the insurance provider. Purchase of the student accident insurance policy constitutes an agreement between the student and/or parent and the insurance company, not with the school district. The school district does not assume any contractual responsibility for any expenses not covered by insurance.

**REQUIRED PREPARTICIPATION FORMS** – No student will be allowed to participate in any tryout, practice, scrimmage or contest before all required participation forms are signed in all appropriate spaces and on file with the school. These forms include, but may not be limited to, the following:

**OCS Athletic Participation Form**- this form can be found on the Onslow County Schools website. It contains a statement of the student's residence, emergency contact person and contact information, the insurance waiver agreement, the Concussion Awareness statement (Gfeller-Waller Act) and the assumption of risk agreement that both student and parent/ guardian must sign acknowledging the risk of injury. Student and parent/guardian's signature is required in three (3) different places on this form.

**Medical Exam Form**- this form can also be found on the Onslow County Schools website. Every student is required to have a medical exam performed by a licensed medical professional every 365 days. This is the medical exam form the doctor or physician's assistant must complete, sign and stamp.

**Return to Play form** – any student who is suspected of having suffered a concussion, or who has missed more than 5 consecutive days of practice and competition due to illness or injury, must have this form signed by a licensed doctor before being allowed to return to practice or competition. This form can be found on the Onslow County Schools website, as well as on the NCHSAA website [www.NCHSAA.org](http://www.NCHSAA.org)

**CRIMINAL CHARGES** - A student cannot participate in athletics in any capacity if he/she has been convicted of a felony, or any criminal offense that would have been a felony if committed by an adult. A plea of No Contest will have the same results as being found guilty. Any student with pending felony charges will not be allowed to participate in any athletic contests until the case is adjudicated or charges are dropped. Furthermore, a student who is actively participating on a school team and has any pending criminal charges (other than minor traffic tickets) filed against him/her will not be allowed to participate in any contests until the case is adjudicated. The head coach, in consultation with the school's administration, will determine if the student can remain on the team while awaiting adjudication of the case. It is the responsibility of any student who has any pending criminal charges (other than minor traffic tickets), or is on probation, or is in the deferred prosecution program, to notify his/her coach of the violations and any subsequent disciplinary action stemming from those legal proceedings.

## **EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENT-ATHLETES**

Participation in athletics is completely voluntary. It is a privilege to be a member of a school's athletic team; a privilege which can only be earned when one abides by the rules of the state, the district, the school and of that specific team. Our student-

athletes and coaches are expected to be models of good behavior and sportsmanship. They are representing the school and the community at athletic events throughout the area and across the state. We want to be proud of their efforts. OCS and our schools provide coaches, facilities, transportation and equipment to our athletic teams. The district and each individual school reserves the right to revoke or restrict the privilege of participating in athletics if a student fails to live up to expectations and/or violates school, district, state or team policies. Providing false information about residence, domicile, home address or with whom the student actually resides is grounds for revoking the privilege of participating in athletics and can lead to a 365 day suspension from participation in athletics statewide by the NCHSAA.

**SPORTSMANSHIP-** The NCHSAA defines sportsmanship as *the quality of responsible behavior characterized by a spirit of generosity and a genuine concern for opponents, officials and teammates.*

Student-athletes should:

- realize you represent the school and therefore have an obligation to be a true sportsman, encouraging through your behavior the practice of good sportsmanship by others.
- recognize that good sportsmanship is more important than victory, therefore approve and applaud good team play, individual skill and outstanding examples of sportsmanship and fair play exhibited by either team.
- respect the judgment and integrity of game officials at all times.
- be modest in victory and gracious in defeat.

All student-athletes and coaches are expected to exemplify and follow these guidelines. When an athlete exhibits behavior that is detrimental to these concepts of sportsmanship and fair play, he/she can be removed from a given practice or contest and disciplinary action taken, including possible removal from the team.

**TAUNTING** includes actions that are meant to bait, anger, embarrass, ridicule or demean others. Any form of taunting is not in keeping with conduct or behaviors that promote sportsmanship. In all sports, taunting is considered a flagrant unsportsmanlike foul and is subject to immediate ejection from a contest.

**EJECTION POLICY-** The NCHSAA Ejection Policy applies to all persons involved in athletic contests, including student-athletes, coaches, managers and game administrators. The following examples include behavior or conduct which will result in an ejection from a contest: fighting, biting observed by an official, taunting, baiting or spitting toward an opponent, profanity, obscene gestures, or disrespectfully addressing an official, (making physical contact with an official is subject to automatic expulsion and can result in ineligibility for remainder of one's career).

- Football- ejection from the contest, miss the next contest at that level and all contests in the interim (miss the next two contests for fighting)
- All other sports-ejection from the contest, miss the next two contests at that level and all contests in the interim (miss the next four contests for fighting)
- Players receiving two ejections for unacceptable behavior will be suspended from all sports for the remainder of that sports season.
- Receiving a third ejection in a school year will result in suspension from athletics for one calendar year (365 days) from the date of the third ejection.
- Ejections in the last game of the season carry over to the next sport in which the individual participates that year.
- For soccer, five yellow cards accumulated by the same player will result in a suspension. An additional five yellow cards accumulated by the same player will result in an ejection. The player will be suspended from all sports for the remainder of that season on the 15th yellow card. A red card disqualification that is not an ejection is the equivalent of two yellow cards.
- For wrestling, track, tennis, golf, cross-country, and swimming any individual ejected from an individual event or individual tournament may not participate for the remainder of the event from which he or she was ejected and from the next meet or match.
- Ejected players may practice during their suspensions but may not play.
- Teams: in the following situations Teams will not be allowed to participate in the playoffs:
  - (1) A team whose players and coaches accumulate six or more individual ejections.
  - (2) A team whose players and coaches accumulate three or more individual ejections for fighting (note: if a situation occurs where three or more players on one team are ejected during one fighting incident, those three individual ejections will cause the team to lose its playoff privileges).
  - (3) If a team hits either threshold (total ejections or ejections for fighting) during the playoffs, it will be disqualified from further participation in the playoffs.
- If a team has players ejected due to fighting, the head coach must take the NFHS Learning Course "*Teaching and Modeling Behavior*" (\$20 fee). It must be completed before coaching in the next game.
- Any student-athlete who is ejected or disqualified from a contest is required to complete the NFHS Sportsmanship course before being eligible to return to competition. There is no fee for this program.
- Any student-athlete ejected from a contest is also subject to more severe disciplinary sanctions by his/her school administration.

**TRANSPORTATION-** All transportation to and from athletic contests for team members (including managers and statisticians) is provided in OCS owned vehicles or leased by OCS and all team members **MUST** travel in these vehicles. Any exceptions to this policy must be approved in writing by the school principal or his/her designee **prior to** the contest.

**HAZING-** Hazing is defined as deliberately subjecting another person to physical injury, mental anguish or personal embarrassment as part of an initiation or prerequisite for membership.... regardless of the individual's willingness to participate. Such actions violate North Carolina statute (G.S. 14.35), as well as OCS Board of Education policies 1710, 4021 and 4331. Any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization or team which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or person is **NOT ALLOWED**. Students found guilty of hazing will be removed from team membership and face criminal sanctions from law enforcement authorities.

**SUBSTANCE ABUSE-** Student-athletes are role models and leaders in their schools and communities. As a result they are expected to adhere to high standards- physically and socially. OCS strongly discourages the use of any legal drugs, inhalants or medications contrary to the manner in which they were prescribed, as well as any use of illegal substances, alcohol or tobacco products by our students. By discouraging the use and/or abuse of these substances, OCS emphasizes its concern for the health of our students and of the long-term physical and emotional effects of chemical use on student's health and well-being. OCS Board of Education policies 4320, 4325 and 4335 reflect the District's support of existing state laws that restrict the use and/or possession of illegal substances and establishes standards of conduct for our students. OCS also does not support nor condone the use of any performance enhancing drugs. Any student-athletes found in possession of any illegal substances will face disciplinary actions mandated by Board policies, any relevant school policies, as well as any team policies which can result in permanent removal from sports teams.

**SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS-** Any student who is suspended out of school is not allowed to attend any practices, scrimmages or contests and cannot participate in any fashion during the length of the suspension. Individual schools may impose stricter penalties, including removal from the team. A student-athlete who is assigned In-School Suspension is subject to the rules of his/her specific school and team's policies regarding In-School Suspension.

**SOCIAL MEDIA-** Onslow County Schools recognizes and supports its student-athletes' rights to freedom of speech, expression, and association, including the use of online social networks. However, each student-athlete must remember that participation in athletics is a privilege, not a right. Student-athletes represent their school and are expected to portray themselves, their team, their school and community in a positive manner at all times. Any online postings must therefore be consistent with team policies, federal and state laws, as well as any rules, regulations and policies set forth by the OCS Board of Education and the NCHSAA. Any violations of the above listed rules, regulations and/or policies will result in disciplinary actions which can lead to removal from the team, suspension from school and possible criminal prosecution.

## **DUAL SPORT PARTICIPATION**

- A) participation on two [2] school teams during the same sport season - Athletes may be permitted dual participation on two school teams in the same sport season provided the athletes and coaches involved can resolve all conflicts **in advance** regarding expectations, practices, and participation in games or contests. Furthermore, the athlete must agree that if they quit or are dismissed from one of the dual sports they will not be allowed to continue in the other dual sport for the remainder of that sport season. The school's Athletic Director and Principal must approve in advance dual participation during the same sport season of any athlete.
- B) participation on a school and non-school team during the same sport season - Dual participation on a non-school team is allowed as long as the athlete commits to his/her school team as their primary commitment. No school practice, contest, game, or team function can be missed for non-school participation without advance approval of the school coach and school athletic director. All non-school athletic participation during the school team season is secondary to participation in OCS athletic teams and not to be encouraged or discouraged by the coaching staff at any OCS school. Any athlete who, **without written prior approval**, misses a school athletic practice, contest, game, or function to participate in a non-school athletic event, can be suspended from all OCS school athletic participation for 5 weeks to be served in any seasons that the athlete participates in, even if the athlete's next season of participation on any OCS school team is not immediately following the season in which the athlete was initially suspended. This suspension will carry over to the next grade and to any other OCS school.



**QUITTING A TEAM-** Commitment and dedication are two character traits that participation in athletics help to promote. With that in mind, no student-athlete may quit one team in order to begin participating on another sports team at the school during the same sport season, unless by the mutual agreement of the athlete, the coach of the team the athlete is leaving and the school's athletic director. Quitting a sport is not to be viewed as a penalty that prevents an athlete from being allowed to participate on other sport teams. However, the athlete who quits a team cannot participate in another sport until the season of the team they quit has ended. No athlete may quit one sport and then participate in off-season workouts or skill-development for another sport during the same season that the athlete quit.

**RETURN OF EQUIPMENT-** All uniforms and equipment issued by the school to an athlete must be returned in good shape or must be paid for **before** an athlete can play another sport or in another season. Seniors will not be eligible to participate in graduation exercises until all school-issued athletic uniforms and/or equipment is returned or paid for. Student-athletes who transfer to another Onslow County school will not be allowed to participate in athletics until all equipment is returned or paid for at the previous school.

## **EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS**

The role that parents play in the life of a student-athlete has a tremendous impact on the student's athletic experience. Among the many responsibilities of a parent is to give their child roots and wings to soar. The roots come from a solid sense of security and protection, a clear sense of being unconditionally loved and a strong sense of self-worth, but not overinflated self-esteem or entitlement. The wings and the ability to fly both come from developing the right muscles, testing out the air currents through repeated trials and errors, and having the courage to eventually leave the nest. We encourage parents to support your student unconditionally. Making mistakes is part of learning. Recognize what your student is trying to do, the effort he/she is giving, not necessarily the results. You can also help your student learn the importance of teamwork and sacrificing for the greater good of the team by modeling teamwork. If possible, get involved in your school's athletic booster club or find ways you can volunteer to help support your student's team. Be ever mindful that your student's teammates, coaches and game officials are not the enemy. Avoid being critical of other players, the coaches or officials. It is extremely conflicting for a student to demonstrate respect for those whom he/she is fully aware that his/her parents do not respect. With these thoughts in mind, here are a few guidelines:

- Attend the pre-season parents' meeting; sign and return all required participation forms.
- Abide by all regulations, rules and procedures for our athletic programs.
- Attend as many of your child's events as possible.
- Understand the ultimate purpose of athletics. It exists as an integral part of the total educational mission of the school, and is meant to teach life-long lessons.
- Appreciate the educational opportunity that your child is receiving in our athletic program. This includes the enormous time and effort provided by the coaches.
- Understand that the goals of the team & athletic program are more important than the hopes & dreams you have for your child.
- Support the coach in public around other parents, fans and particularly at home in front of your student.
- Avoid putting pressure on your son/daughter to start, to score, or be the star of the team; emphasize team first. Dwelling on playing time or stats is a selfish act and not conducive to building the team-first concept.
- Be respectful of other players & their parents. You never know whose grandparents, aunt, uncle or family friend may be nearby.
- Serve as beacons of good sportsmanship, to your student and other parents as well. Show respect for opponents and game officials.
- Express concerns and questions in a courteous and civil manner and do it at the appropriate time and in the proper setting.

### **Appropriate Communication From Parents to Coaches**

1. Notification of any specific medical abnormalities or medical needs of your child
2. Notification of any schedule conflicts well in advance
3. Notification (in advance) of any transportation plans that deviate from stated district and school policy
4. Specific concerns early in the season regarding a coach's expectations

### **Appropriate Concerns Parents Should Address With Coaches**

1. The treatment of your child emotionally or physically

2. Safety and health concerns regarding your child
3. Concerns about your child's grades, behavior or disciplinary actions towards him/her
4. Ways to help your child mature and improve
5. Realistic evaluation of your child's opportunity to play collegiately and/or questions about the process of college recruitment

#### **Issues NOT APPROPRIATE For Parents to Discuss With Coaches**

1. Game strategy
2. Playing time or positioning of team personnel
3. Play calling
4. Any other students besides your own child

#### **To Discuss an Appropriate Concern with Your Child's Coach**

1. Call the school and schedule a meeting with the coach
2. If you cannot reach the coach, contact the school's Athletic Director who will schedule the meeting with the coach

*NOTE: under NO circumstances should a parent/coach meeting occur immediately prior to or immediately after a practice or contest as these tend to be emotional times and NOT conducive to resolution*

#### **CHAIN OF COMMUNICATION**

1. Meet with your child's coach
2. If no satisfactory resolution, meet with the school's Athletic Director
3. If still no satisfactory resolution, meet with the school's Administration
4. If there are still concerns, contact the District's Coordinator of Athletics

## **EXPECTATIONS OF COACHES**

The coach is responsible for setting an example for his or her players and setting the tone for the program. A coach who behaves professionally will encourage others around him or her to do the same. Coaches must exhibit proper leadership and conduct, be fair and consistent disciplinarians, show respect to opponents and officials, and instruct, train and encourage every player on their team. The coach must be a strong, positive, respectful role model for his/her athletes by being a consistent ambassador of the game, his/her school and Onslow County Schools. Coaches should conduct pre-season meetings with players and their parents/guardians in order to convey expectations and team rules and establish a line of communication. All coaches are expected to have an understanding of conference, district and state athletic policies, as well as the rules and regulations governing their respective sport.

The National Federation of State Associations (NFHS) and the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA) both recognize 14 legal duties of a coach:

- 1. Duty to Plan** – A coach must demonstrate awareness of the maturity, physical development and readiness of athletes with appropriate plans for instruction, conditioning and supervision.
- 2. Duty to Supervise** – A coach must be physically present, provide competent instruction, structure practices that are appropriate for the age and maturity of players, prevent foreseeable injuries and respond to injury or trauma in an approved manner. This also requires coaches to make sure facilities are locked and students denied access when a competent staff member cannot be present.
- 3. Duty to Assess Athletes Readiness for Practice and Competition** – Athletics administrators and coaches are required to assess the health and physical or maturational readiness skills and physical condition of athletes. A progression of skill development and conditioning improvement should be apparent from practice plans. Athletes must also be medically screened in accordance with state association regulations before participating in practice or competition.
- 4. Duty to Maintain Safe Playing Conditions** – Coaches are considered trained professionals who possess a higher level of knowledge and skill that permits them to identify foreseeable causes of injury inherent in defective indoor and outdoor facilities or hazardous environments.
- 5. Duty to Provide Safe Equipment** – Courts have held athletic supervisors responsible to improve unsafe environments, repair or remove defective equipment or disallow athlete access.



**6. Duty to Instruct Properly** – Athletic practices must be characterized by instruction that accounts for a logical sequence of fundamentals that lead to an enhanced progression of player knowledge, skill, and capability.

**7. Duty to Match Athletes Appropriately** – Athletes should be matched with consideration for maturity skill, age, size and speed. To the degree possible, mismatches should be avoided in all categories.

**8. Duty to Condition Properly** – Practices must account for a progression of cardiovascular and musculoskeletal conditioning regimens that prepare athletes sequentially for more challenging practices and competitive activities.

**9. Duty to Warn** – Coaches are required to warn parents and athletes of unsafe practices specific to a sport and the potential for injury or death. This warning should be issued in writing and both athletes and parents should be required to provide written certification of their comprehension.

**10. Duty to Ensure Athletes are Covered by Injury Insurance** – Athletics administrators and coaches must screen athletes to ensure that family and/or school insurance provides basic level of medical coverage. Athletes should not be allowed to participate without injury insurance.

**11. Duty to Provide Emergency Care** – Coaches are expected to be able to administer standard emergency care (first aid, CPR) in response to a range of traumatic injuries.

**12. Duty to Design a Proper Emergency Response Plan** – Coaches must design plans to ensure an expedited response by EMS and an effective transition to the care and supervision of emergency medical personnel.

**13. Duty to Provide Proper Transportation** – In general, bonded, commercial carriers should be used for out of town transportation. Self or family transportation for local competition may be allowed if parents have adequate insurance coverage for team members other than their family members.

**14. Duty to Select, Train, and Supervise Coaches** – Administrators have a responsibility to ensure that appropriate skill and knowledge levels exist among members of the coaching staff to ensure appropriate levels of safety & well-being among athletes.

Consequently, Onslow County Schools expects that each athletic coach in our district, whether certified, classified, contracted or volunteer, who provides supervisory and instructional service in our interscholastic athletic programs shall:

1. show respect for players, parents, other coaches and staff.
2. respect the integrity and judgment of the game officials.
3. establish and model fair play, sportsmanship, and proper conduct during practices/contests and in the community.
4. never place winning above the value of instilling the highest desirable ideals of character and sportsmanship.
5. ensure that all players are in compliance with all aspects of the Gfeller-Waller Act and that player safety and welfare is the highest priority.
6. ensure that all required forms and documentation for participation are on file for every athlete under the coach's supervision before athlete is allowed to participate in any athletic activities.
7. provide proper supervision of student-athletes while under the coach's direction.
8. use discretion and proper language when providing constructive criticism and when reprimanding players.
9. have completed the NFHS "Fundamentals of Coaching" and the NFHS "Concussion in Sports" courses prior to the date of the first practice in the sport in which they are coaching (high school coaches only).
10. understand the proper administrative chain of command and refer all request or grievances through proper channels, i.e. equipment purchase, fundraising, program funding, eligibility, parental concerns, etc.
11. consistently require all players to adhere to the established rules and standards of the game and demonstrate sportsmanship.
12. properly instruct player in the safe use and care of equipment and uniforms.
13. maintain updated inventory of all team equipment, including uniforms, and secure all practice and play areas related to their respective teams, including locking all doors and gates, as well as turning off all lights after practices/contests.
14. not show students sexually explicit pictures or materials, nor send excessively personal letters, cards, electronic messages or gifts to students, and should avoid giving students rides when it may result in a student being alone in the car with the adult.
15. not recruit student-athletes from other schools.
16. not exert undue influence on a student-athlete's decision to enroll in a particular athletic program at any public or private college, university or post-secondary educational institution.
17. not suggest provide, or encourage any athlete to use non-prescriptive drugs, anabolic steroids, or any substance to

increase physical development or performance that is not approved by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration, the Surgeon General, or the American Medical Association.

**CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK** – In accordance with OCS Board of Education policy 7105, all applicants offered a coaching position with any Onslow County Schools, including substitutes, community volunteers and independent contractors who carry out duties customarily performed by school personnel, shall be required to be fingerprinted and to provide any other information necessary to conduct a criminal history check. The criminal history check will be conducted at the Board's expense. Any applicant who refuses to consent will not be considered for a coaching position.

**STAFF-STUDENTS RELATIONS** - OCS Board policies 4040/7310 expressly prohibit all employees of OCS, including volunteer coaches, from dating, courting or entering into a romantic or sexual relationship with any student while the student is enrolled in the Onslow County School System, regardless of the student's age. Employees, including volunteer coaches, engaging in such inappropriate conduct will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal and may be subject to criminal action as provided in NCGS 14-202.4 and 14-27.7. Furthermore, employees, including volunteer coaches, shall not show students any sexually explicit pictures or materials and must not send excessively personal letters, cards, digital or electronic messages, or gifts to students. Any OCS employee, including volunteer coach, who has reason to believe that another employee or coach is inappropriately involved with a student, as described above, shall report this information to his/her principal or immediate supervisor or to the personnel administrator. An employee who fails to inform his or her principal or immediate supervisor or the personnel administrator of a reported or suspected inappropriate relationship between an employee and a student may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

**TEAM SELECTIONS** - Students try out for sports teams voluntarily. For some of our athletic teams which limit the number of team members, students run the risk of being cut from that team. While selection of a team is a difficult process for all parties involved (coach, student-athlete and parents) some things should be remembered:

- Try-outs are open to all students who meet all prescribed rules of eligibility, including completion of all required pre-participation forms along with necessary parental signatures.
- The tryout period for each team should be of a sufficient duration to allow the coach to make a reasonable assessment of each candidate's ability and potential (minimum of 2 days)
- Students who are not present on the first day of tryouts due to lack of proper paperwork or without being excused by the coach in advance forfeit the minimum 2 day tryout period.
- High school juniors and seniors are not allowed to try out directly for Junior Varsity teams.
- Attendance is required at ALL practices/games/scrimmages scheduled including those on non-school days, unless the student-athlete has prior approval from the coach.
- Only the head coach, school Administration or Athletic Director can excuse a student-athlete from practices and contests. Failure of a student-athlete to attend practice or contests is grounds for removal from the team.
- Sunday practices or any required team gatherings **are ABSOLUTELY PROHIBITED.**
- Onslow County School Board policy prohibits athletic practices or contests on any day that school is cancelled or dismissed early due to inclement weather conditions (unless special permission is granted by the Superintendent or his/her designee).

#### **COMMUNICATIONS PARENTS SHOULD EXPECT FROM COACHES**

1. Expectations the coach has for your student and other players on the team
2. Locations and times of all practices and games/contests
3. Any additional team requirements- i.e., fees, special equipment, overnight trips, off-season conditioning programs
4. Procedure for dealing with injuries should they occur during practice or at away contests
5. List of team rules and consequences including discipline that results in denial of a student's participation

## **HEALTH & SAFETY GUIDELINES**

Participation in High School and Middle School athletics is a privilege involving both responsibilities, risks and rights. The athlete's responsibilities are to play fair, to give his/her best, to keep in training, and to conduct himself/herself with sportsmanship in a manner that will bring credit to the sport and school. Participation in athletics carries with it an inherent risk of accident and serious injury which can be reduced by obeying all safety rules, reporting all physical and hygiene problems to coaches, practicing proper personal hygiene, inspecting one's own equipment daily, following a proper conditioning program and refraining from the use of illegal drugs or controlled substances. The student-athlete has the right to optimal protection against injury which may be secured through good conditioning and technical instruction, proper regulation and conditions of play, and adequate health supervision. Periodic evaluation of each of these factors will help assure a safe and healthful athletic experience for our students.

**CONCUSSION AWARENESS-** The Gfeller-Waller Concussion Awareness Act was drafted and implemented to protect the safety of student-athletes in North Carolina and was signed into law on June 16, 2011 by Governor Beverly Purdue. There are three major areas of focus in the law and these include: education, emergency action and post-concussion protocol implementation, and clearance/return to play or practice following a suspected concussion. A concussion is an injury to the brain caused by a direct or indirect blow to the head. It results in the brain not working as it should. It may or may not cause a person to black out or pass out. It can happen from a fall, a hit to the head, or a hit to the body that causes the head and brain to move quickly back and forth. Every student-athlete and his/her parent or legal custodian is required by the Gfeller-Waller Act to review a concussion information sheet explaining the causes and symptoms of a concussion, and then sign a form stating that they have read the sheet and are now aware of the serious nature of concussions and will make the coaches aware if they notice any symptoms of a concussion. If a student-athlete is suspected of suffering a concussion, he/she must be seen by a doctor and go through a series of return-to-play protocols before being cleared by a doctor to resume participation in sports.

**HEAT and HUMIDITY GUIDELINES-** High temperatures and high humidity are potentially dangerous for athletes. Exertional Heat Stroke is the leading cause of preventable death in high school athletics. Exertional Heat Stroke also results in thousands of emergency room visits and hospitalizations throughout the nation each year. The National Center for Catastrophic Sports Injury Research reports that 35 high school football players died of heat stroke between 1995 and 2010. Coaches and athletes should be aware of the signs and symptoms of exertional heat illness and distress; such as weakness, nausea/vomiting, paleness, headache, lightheadedness, clumsiness, confusion, stumbling, collapse, obvious behavioral changes and /or other central nervous system problems. To prevent heat related illnesses and ensure the safety of student-athletes the following precautions should be taken in extremely hot or humid situations:

- Wet Bulb Globe readings will be used during high heat & humidity conditions & NCHSAA practice modifications will be observed.
- Be sure athletes are well hydrated. Plenty of water should be consumed before physical activity begins and there must be frequent water breaks.
- Use heat acclimatization techniques in developing practice plans. Heat acclimatization is the process of allowing the body to progressively adapt to exercising in the heat, so it can cool itself effectively and one can then better and more safely tolerate physical activity in the heat. Full heat acclimatization can take up to 10-14 days for the most important adaptations to occur.
- Avoid physical activity in direct sunlight.
- Carefully monitor at-risk athletes - those who are obese, unfit, have been recently ill [particularly gastrointestinal illness], have a previous history of exertional heat illness, have the Sickle Cell Trait, or using certain medications.
- Recognize early signs of distress and developing heat illness, immediately remove athlete from activity and begin first aid.

**FLUIDS & HYDRATION-** Over 60% of a typical human's body weight comes from fluids. Being properly hydrated is one of the easiest ways for athletes to ensure optimal performance and lower the risk of heat illness. Dehydration is a condition that occurs when the loss of body fluids, mostly water, exceeds the amount that is taken in. When this mismatch occurs, the body overheats and it becomes more difficult to function properly. This results in impaired performance and leads to early fatigue and increased risk for heat illness, heat cramping, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. The signs and symptoms of dehydration range from minor to severe and include:

- Increased thirst
- Dry mouth and swollen tongue
- Weakness
- Dizziness and/or fainting
- Confusion
- Palpitations (feeling that the heart is jumping or pounding)
- Inability to sweat
- Sluggishness
- Decreased urine output
- Goose bumps and/or chills

Urine color may indicate dehydration. If urine is concentrated and deeply yellow or amber, it may indicate dehydration. Not all fluids that a person can consume will help to replenish the water and nutrients necessary. Water or sports drinks, which are specially designed to contain enough carbohydrates to boost energy during workouts, but not so much that they are hard to digest, are generally the best option for hydrating the body before and during physical activity. The longer the duration of exercise and physical activity, the more important it becomes to rely on sports drinks, with their higher concentrations of sodium and carbohydrates, for fluid replacement. Sports drinks can be especially helpful in heat and humidity since they replace electrolytes lost in sweat. Sports drinks may be the best option for individuals with poor caloric intake prior to participation.

**Keep the 3-H RULE in mind.** Sports drinks trump water for performance and safety when exercise is **Hard, Hot,** and lasts more than an **Hour.**

The Sports Medicine Advisory Committee of the NFHS has put forth the following position statement:

- Appropriate hydration before, during, and after exercise is an important ingredient to healthy and successful sports participation.
- Rapid weight loss represents a loss of body water. A loss of just 1-2% of body weight (1.5 to 3 pounds for a 150 pound athlete) can negatively impact performance. A loss of 3% or more of body weight can increase the risk for exertional heat related illness.
- Athletes should be weighed before and after warm weather practice sessions and contests to assess fluid losses.
- Athletes with high body fat percentages can become dehydrated faster than athletes with lower body fat percentages while working out under the same environmental conditions.
- All athletes have different sweating rates and some lose much more salt through their sweat than others.
- Poor acclimatization/fitness levels can greatly contribute to an athlete's dehydration problems.
- Medications and fevers can each greatly contribute to an athlete's dehydration problems and risk for heat illness.
- Environmental temperatures and humidity both contribute to dehydration and heat illness.
- Clothing, such as dark, bulky, or rubber protective equipment can drastically increase the chance of dehydration and heat illness.
- Even dry climates can have high humidity if sprinkler systems are scheduled to run before early morning practices start. This collection of water does not evaporate until environmental temperatures increase and dew points lower.

#### **WHAT NOT TO DRINK DURING EXERCISE:**

- Fruit juices with greater than 8 percent carbohydrate content a soda can both result in a bloated feeling and abdominal cramping.
- Beverages containing caffeine, alcohol, and carbonation are not to be used because of the high risk of dehydration associated with excess urine production, or decreased voluntary fluid intake.
- Athletes should be aware that nutritional supplements are not limited to pills and powders; many of these new fluids contain stimulants such as caffeine and/or ephedrine.
  - These stimulants may increase the risk of heart or heat illness problems when exercising.
  - Many of these drinks are being produced by traditional water, soft drink, and sports drink companies and may provide confusion to the sports community. As is true with other forms of supplements, these "power drinks or fluid supplements" are not regulated by the FDA. Thus, the purity and accuracy of contents on the label are not guaranteed.
  - Many of these beverages, which claim to provide additional power, energy, etc., have additional ingredients that are not necessary, some that are potentially harmful, and some that actually include substances banned by such governing bodies as the NCAA and the USOC.

**SPORTS NUTRITION** – Just as hydration is important to student's health and well-being, caloric intake is also important to ensuring optimal athletic performance. Student-athletes should focus on eating lean proteins, fruits and vegetables and whole grains to ensure the body is prepared for training. Avoid going into any training session with an empty fuel tank. A high carb & protein meal (such as whole grain in breads, rice, pasta, fruits, vegetables, chicken, turkey, or low-fat yogurt) should be consumed 3-4 hours before practice or competition and an easily digestible snack 60-90 minutes before activity. Avoid eating a diet high in saturated or trans fats, as these are unhealthy and may limit athletic capacity. These types of fat are found in higher fat dairy products, meats, fried food and processed foods/snacks. Primarily unsaturated fats such as olives, avocados, nuts, seeds and salmon should be chosen instead. Carbohydrates are the most rapid source of energy for muscles and protein plays a major role in helping the body recover after exercise. When students eat a combination of carbohydrates and protein, the carbs are used to fuel the muscles during activity, while the protein is used to help build and repair muscle tissue. It can take up to 36 hours to reload the muscles of students who delay refueling their bodies. To aid the body in faster recovery after exercise or competition, choose carbohydrate-rich foods with some protein within 30 min of finishing a training session or competition (e.g., chocolate milk, protein shakes or bars). Be careful to limit the intake of these pre-packaged sports products. While they can be used effectively in an athlete's diet, whole foods should be consumed when possible. Great recovery foods include: granola, bagels with peanut butter, sub sandwiches with lean meats like chicken or turkey, as well as crackers and cheese. Making healthy food choices by students requires encouragement and commitment.



**PERFORMANCE ENHANCING DRUGS (PEDs)** – Often dietary supplements and performance enhancing drugs are seen as an easy way to enhance athletic performance, increase energy levels, lose or gain weight and feel better. If taken to an extreme, this can create a culture more concerned about “quick fixes,” rather than hard work, development of good nutrition practices and overall long term health. The number of middle school, high school and college students that illegally use and abuse anabolic, over-the-counter dietary supplements, human growth hormones (HGH) and other PEDs appears to be growing. In a 2011 survey, over 1.5 million high school students in the U.S. admitted to using anabolic steroids, not including those unknowingly ingested through spiked dietary supplements, and 35% of middle school and high school athletes admitted to using protein supplements. At the same time 85% of youth report never having a parent, teacher, or coach talk with them about the dangers of using PEDs. It is important to realize that dietary supplements are not subject to the same strict regulations as prescription or over-the-counter medications. Therefore, parents and students should closely examine the ingredients in any dietary supplement prior to ingestion. A recent study by Informed Choice Labs, which randomly selected 58 protein powders off the shelves of well-known supplement stores, found that 25% of those powders contained anabolic steroids. An additional 11% of the products tested positive for stimulants not indicated on the label. Young athletes often take the advice of the supplement store representative on what products are effective to gain muscle, drop body fat, and enhance performance. Warning to parents: speak with your son or daughter’s physician and/or a board certified sports dietitian before they partake in a dietary supplement regimen. To learn if a specific dietary supplement has been certified as safe, visit <http://www.nfsport.com/>. For more information about the dangers of PEDs go to <http://taylorhooton.org/>

**MRSA, HIV, HEPATITIS B** - By its nature, participation in interscholastic athletics includes the risk of possible transmission of infectious disease such as MRSA, HIV and Hepatitis B. This risk can be diminished with the practice of proper safety and hygiene measures.


**Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)** is a type of staph bacteria that is resistant to many antibiotics. In the community, most MRSA infections are skin infections. In medical facilities, MRSA causes life-threatening bloodstream infections, pneumonia and surgical site infections. Anyone can get MRSA through direct contact with an infected wound or by sharing personal items, such as towels or razors that have touched infected skin. MRSA infection risk can be increased when a person is in certain activities or places that involve crowding, skin-to-skin contact, and shared equipment or supplies, such as athletes during competition. There are the personal hygiene steps that can reduce the risk of MRSA infection:

- Maintain good hand and body hygiene. Wash hands often, and clean body regularly, especially after exercise.
- Keep cuts, scrapes, and wounds clean and covered until healed.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels and razors.
- Get care early if you think you might have an infection.

**Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA)**

MRSA (mer-sa) is a type of infection caused by *Staph* bacteria that is resistant to some common antibiotics such as penicillin.

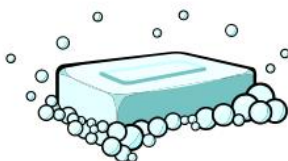

Staph and MRSA are spread by direct physical contact with an infected individual or by touching objects contaminated with the bacteria such as towels, uniforms, or sports equipment.



The infected area usually starts out as a small bump resembling a pimple, which becomes redder and can develop pus drainage.




Report any suspicious skin sores to your parents, coach, trainer or school nurse. See your health care provider!

**To prevent this infection, athletes should:**

- wash hands frequently
- shower immediately after physical activity
- never share personal hygiene items
- cover any open sore on skin when involved in contact sports.
- clean and disinfect all shared athletic equipment after each use (mats, pads, helmets, etc.)



**Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)** weakens a person's immune system by destroying important cells that fight disease and infection. Only certain body fluids from a person who has HIV can transmit the virus to others. These fluids must come in contact with a mucous membrane or damaged tissue or be directly injected into the bloodstream (from a needle or syringe) for transmission to occur. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in only extremely rare cases, has HIV been transmitted by:

- 1) Being bitten by a person with HIV. Each of the very small number of documented cases has involved severe trauma with extensive tissue damage and the presence of blood. There is no risk of transmission if the skin is not broken.
- 2) Contact between broken skin, wounds, or mucous membranes and HIV-infected blood or blood-contaminated body fluids.
- 3) Eating food that has been pre-chewed by an HIV-infected person. The contamination occurs when infected blood from a caregiver's mouth mixes with food while chewing. The only known cases are among infants.

HIV does not survive long outside the human body (such as on surfaces), and it cannot reproduce outside a human host.

HIV **is not** spread by:

- Mosquitoes, ticks, or other insects.
- Saliva, tears, or sweat that is not mixed with the blood of an HIV-positive person.
- Hugging, shaking hands, sharing toilets, sharing dishes, or closed-mouth or "social" kissing with someone who is HIV-positive.
- Other sexual activities that don't involve the exchange of body fluids (for example, touching).

As a result, in the athletic setting the risk of spreading HIV can be all but eliminated by following simple personal hygiene steps.

**HEPATITIS B** is a liver disease that results from infection with the Hepatitis B virus. Severity can vary from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a serious, lifelong illness. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Hepatitis B is usually spread when blood or another body fluid from a person infected with the hepatitis B virus enters the body of someone who is not infected. This can happen through sexual contact with an infected person or sharing needles, syringes, or other drug-injection equipment. Hepatitis B can also be passed from an infected mother to her baby at birth. Therefore, in the athletic setting the transmission of Hepatitis B from one person to another is extremely rare.

Signs and symptoms of Hepatitis B include:

- abdominal pain
- dark urine
- fever
- joint pain
- loss of appetite
- nausea and vomiting
- weakness and fatigue
- yellowing skin and eyes (jaundice)

**SICKLE CELL DISEASE-** Sickle cell disease is an inherited blood disorder that affects red blood cells and is not uncommon in the African-American community. One of the questions that is on the current pre-participation medical form has to do with sickle cell disease, so it is important that everyone involved in interscholastic athletics has some awareness and understanding about the disease.

People with sickle cell disease have red blood cells that contain mostly hemoglobin\* S, an abnormal type of hemoglobin. Sometimes these red blood cells become sickle-shaped (crescent shaped) and have difficulty passing through small blood vessels. When sickle-shaped cells block small blood vessels, less blood can reach that part of the body. Tissue that does not receive a normal blood flow eventually becomes damaged. This is what causes the complications of sickle cell disease. There is currently no universal cure for sickle cell disease. Hemoglobin – is the main substance of the red blood cell. It helps red blood cells carry oxygen from the air in our lungs to all parts of the body. Normal red blood cells contain hemoglobin A. Hemoglobin S and hemoglobin C are abnormal types of hemoglobin. Normal red blood cells are soft and round and can squeeze through tiny blood tubes (vessels). Normally, red blood cells live for about 120 days before new ones replace them. People with sickle cell conditions make a different form of hemoglobin A called hemoglobin S (S stands for sickle). Red blood cells containing mostly hemoglobin S do not live as long as normal red blood cells (normally about 16 days). They also become stiff, distorted in shape and have difficulty passing through the body's small blood vessels. When sickle-shaped cells block small blood vessels, less blood can reach that part of the body. Tissue that does not receive a normal blood flow eventually becomes damaged. This is what causes the complications of sickle cell disease.



**There are several types of sickle cell disease.** The most common are: Sickle Cell Anemia (SS), Sickle-Hemoglobin C Disease (SC), Sickle Beta-Plus Thalassemia and Sickle BetaZero Thalassemia. Sickle Cell trait (AS) is an inherited condition in which both hemoglobin A and S are produced in the red blood cells, always more A than S. Sickle cell trait is not a type of sickle cell disease. People with sickle cell trait are generally healthy. Sickle cell conditions are inherited from parents in much the same way as blood type, hair color and texture, eye color and other physical traits. The types of hemoglobin a person makes in the red blood cells depend upon what hemoglobin genes the person inherits from his or her parents. Like most genes, hemoglobin genes are inherited in two sets...one from each parent. Examples: If one parent has Sickle Cell Anemia and the other is Normal, all of the children will have sickle cell trait. If one parent has Sickle Cell Anemia and the other has Sickle Cell Trait, there is a 50% chance (or 1 out of 2) of having a baby with either sickle cell disease or sickle cell trait with each pregnancy. When both parents have Sickle Cell Trait, they have a 25% chance (1 of 4) of having a baby with sickle cell disease with each pregnancy.

In the United States people are often surprised when they learn that a person who is not African American has sickle cell disease. The disease originated in at least 4 places in Africa and in the Indian/Saudi Arabian subcontinent. It exists in all countries of Africa and in areas where Africans have migrated. It is most common in West and Central Africa where as many as 25% of the people have sickle cell trait and 1-2% of all babies are born with a form of the disease. In the US with an estimated population of over 270 million, about 1,000 babies are born with sickle cell disease each year. In contrast, Nigeria, with an estimated 1997 population of 90 million, 45,000-90,000 babies with sickle cell disease are born each year. The transatlantic slave trade was largely responsible for introducing the sickle cell gene into the Americas and the Caribbean. However, sickle cell disease had already spread from Africa to Southern Europe by the time of the slave trade, so it is present in Portuguese, Spaniards, French Corsicans, Sardinians, Sicilians, mainland Italians, Greeks, Turks and Cypriots. Sickle cell disease appears in most of the Near and Middle East countries including Lebanon, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Yemen. The condition has also been reported in India and Sri Lanka. Sickle cell disease is an international health problem and truly a global challenge.

For more information on Sickle cell, go to <http://www.sicklecelldisease.org/index.phtml>

**COMMOTIO CORDIS-** is sudden death that results from a lethal disruption of heart rhythm that occurs as a result of a blow to the area directly over the heart (the precordial region), at a critical time during the cycle of a heart beat causing cardiac arrest. It is a form of ventricular fibrillation (V-Fib), not mechanical damage to the heart muscle or surrounding organs, and not the result of heart disease. It most often occurs during participation in sports, most often baseball, often despite a chest protector. It is most often caused by a projectile, but can also be caused by the blow of an elbow or other body part, striking the precordial region over the heart. The thorax of an adolescent, being less developed, is more prone to this injury given the circumstances. The USA National Commotio Cordis Registry reported 188 cases between 1996 and 2007, with about half occurring during organized sports.

- It is the leading cause of death for youth baseball players averaging 2 to 3 deaths per year.
- 96% of the victims were male and averaged 14.7 years old
- Most cases were fatal, but the survival rate increased to 35% when automated external defibrillators were used within three minutes of the impact.
- Chest protectors are designed to reduce trauma from blunt bodily injury, but they do not offer protection from commotio cordis.
- Almost 20% of the victims in football, baseball, lacrosse and hockey were wearing chest protectors.

**EMERGENCY ACTION PLANS-** Every middle and high school is required to have an Athletic Emergency Action Plan. Emergency situations may arise at any time during athletic events and practices. Expedient action must be taken in order to provide the best possible care to the sport participant or spectator if emergency and/or life threatening conditions arise. The development and implementation of an emergency plan will help ensure that the best care will be provided. As emergencies may occur at any time and during any activity, all coaches and those working at athletic events must be prepared. School athletic departments have a duty to develop an emergency plan that may be implemented immediately when necessary and to provide appropriate standards of emergency care. As athletic injuries may occur at any time and during any activity, the coaching staff must be prepared. This preparation involves formulation of an emergency plan, proper coverage of events, maintenance of appropriate emergency equipment and supplies, utilization of appropriate emergency medical personnel, and continuing education in the area of emergency medicine and planning. Hopefully, through careful pre-participation physical screenings, adequate medical coverage, safe practice and training techniques and other safety avenues, some

potential emergencies may be averted. However, accidents and injuries are inherent with sports participation, and proper preparation should enable each emergency situation to be managed appropriately. These are the basic components of every emergency action plan for athletics:

1. Emergency Personnel
2. Emergency Communication
3. Emergency Equipment
4. Roles of Certified Athletic Trainers, Student Trainers, Coaches, and Administrators
5. Venue Directions