



Arizona Medical and Sports Experts Come Together to Advance Lifesaving Measures for the State's High School Athletes

Up to 90% of sudden deaths among high school student athletes preventable with best practice policies proven effective in dozens of other states

Phoenix, AZ (April 6, 2022) – The Korey Stringer Institute (KSI), a national sports safety research and advocacy organization supported by the NFL and National Athletic Trainers' Association, today as part of its "Team Up for Sports Safety" initiative is convening dozens of Arizona's foremost experts in medicine and sports to develop a policy roadmap to advance medical practices proven to reduce sport-related deaths. The meeting, which is being hosted at the Arizona Interscholastic Association Headquarters in Phoenix, Arizona, brings together representatives from the Arizona Athletic Trainers' Association, AIA Sports Medicine Advisory Committee, sports medicine physicians, mental health experts, climatologists and others to discuss ways to make high school sports safer in Arizona.

"The Arizona Athletic Trainers Association is excited to collaborate with multiple stakeholders to increase the health and safety of Secondary School athletes in Arizona. While Arizona is a leader in athletic healthcare, improvement and implementation of current practice is essential to continued best practices. Access to appropriate health care provisions is instrumental in the prevention and care of student athlete's injuries or illnesses," said AzATA President, David Mesman, DHA, Med, AT, ATC. "Review of the current policies and regulations will be valuable when engaging strategic focus for recommended change."

Research has shown that nearly 90% of all sudden death in sports is caused by four conditions: sudden cardiac arrest, traumatic head injury, exertional heat stroke, and exertional sickling. It has also shown that adopting evidence-based safety measures significantly reduces these risks and can save lives.

"There are several areas regarding health and safety where secondary schools in Arizona are exemplary, as noted by our publication in the Journal of Athletic Training regarding emergency preparedness among Arizona high schools." Said AIA sports Medicine Advisory Committee Member and Professor and Director, Athletic Training Programs at A.T. Still University, Tamara Valovich McLeod, PhD, ATC, FNATA. "However, there is always room for improvement with existing policies. In addition, there are emerging areas, such as mental health, that athletic trainers and athletic directors have identified as important areas for the AIA Sports Medicine Advisory Committee to study and draft needed policy. This meeting allows the various stakeholders to be in the same room discussing these key issues and identifying additional improvement areas in health and safety."

Arizona is focused on advancing policies in four key topic areas: Treatment and Prevention of Exertional Heatstroke, Access to Athletic Training Services, Student Athlete Mental Health, and Strength and Conditioning Sessions. Policies discussed during the meeting are proven to support athlete safety. For example, heat acclimatization policies require progressive introduction of equipment, contact and total practice duration. Where it has been mandated, heat illness has been reduced by 55% while cold water

immersion has saved 100% of heat stroke victims when utilized within 10 minutes of the heat stroke, policies that Arizona currently has in place.

“As part of our continuing mission to athlete safety and wellness in Arizona, the Arizona Interscholastic Association Sports Medicine Advisory Committee is honored to host a TUFSS meeting in Arizona. We are excited for the opportunity to collaborate with multiple stakeholders throughout the state to tackle policy advancement in four key athlete safety and wellness areas: heatstroke prevention, access to athletic training services, mental health, and strength and conditioning guidelines. The value of this meeting is not only in the education it provides, but more importantly in the opportunity for collaboration between medical and sports experts with policy makers through small group sessions.” Said AIA Sports Medicine Advisory Committee Chair, Kristina Wilson, MD, MPH, CAQSM. “We are thankful for the TUFSS program coming to Arizona.”

The goal of the meeting will be to yield best-practice policy language which will be put forth for consideration by the AIA Sports Medicine Advisory Committee.

“We know that the implementation of proven health and safety policies will help reduce sport-related fatalities,” said Douglas Casa, Chief Executive Officer of the Korey Stringer Institute and Professor of Kinesiology at The University of Connecticut. “Arizona has been a leader in sports safety policies and we are excited that they are taking this additional action to continue to improve its policies to minimize sport-related high school deaths.”

Since launching its “Team Up for Sports Safety” (TUFSS) campaign in 2017, Arizona is the 26th state that KSI has visited to work with state leaders to propel health and safety policy adoption forward. KSI’s data show that states which have had TUFSS meetings ended up increasing their best practice policy adoption rate by over double of those that did not, when compared across the same period.

For more information about the Team Up For Sport Safety initiative, please visit ksi.uconn.edu.

Media Contacts

Douglas Casa, Korey Stringer Institute, UConn
Douglas.casa@uconn.edu
(860) 486-0265 (office)

Christianne Eason , Korey Stringer Institute
christianne.eason@uconn.edu