

COACHES ASSIST

to deter alcohol and drug abuse.

Coaches Believe

- *Every student-athlete matters*
- *Most student-athletes will respond to clear expectations about alcohol and drug use*
- *We must step up and intervene when needed*
- *My behavior matters*



How To Recognize a Student-Athlete Needs Help (including emergencies)



How to Voice Your Concerns



How to Access Campus and Community Resources

COACHES ASSIST

Steps to Helping a Student-Athlete

- Notice problems
- Take problems seriously
- Feel responsibility for acting
- Check on protocol for your department/ school
- Initiate a conversation
- Make an appropriate referral
- Follow up as needed



How to Recognize a Student-Athlete Needs Help: General Signs and Symptoms

Coaches are not expected to take on a counseling role, but the information below can help you identify student-athletes in distress and provide appropriate assistance. Here are some of the areas where students may display concerning behaviors:

Drop in grades/academic performance

Teammates express concerns

Sports performance changes

- Late for meetings/practice
- Increase in sport-related errors
- Disorganized or erratic performance

Self-destructive behaviors

- Alcohol/drug misuse
- Self-inflicted injuries

Changes in physical appearance

- Worsening personal hygiene
- Unkempt appearance
- Excessive fatigue
- Visible changes in weight

Changes in mood or interactions

- Disproportionate anger
- Negative statements
- Loss of interest in activities
- Social withdrawal
- Statements of hopelessness
- Marked changes in eye contact



How to Recognize a Student-Athlete Needs Help: Substance Abuse Problems

Student-Athletes may share experiences with staff that indicate a substance abuse problem. **Pay attention to learn more about problem severity** if you hear a student-athlete talk about any of these experiences, especially related to alcohol or other drug use:

- Had a hangover
- In trouble with police or other college authorities
- Had a memory loss (blackout)
- Missed class
- Damaged property, pulled fire alarm, etc.
- Got into an argument/fight
- Was hurt or injured
- Was nauseated or vomited
- Expressed sadness for two weeks or longer



How to Recognize a Student-Athlete Needs Help: When to Intervene

Diagnosis needs to be conducted by a trained professional. But if you're trying to determine if a referral is needed, here are some questions you can ask your student-athlete:

Use "CAGE" as a guide to determine if the problem is related to alcohol abuse.

- Have you ever felt you should **Cut down** on your drinking?
- Have people **Annoyed you by criticizing** your drinking?
- Have you ever felt bad or **Guilty about your drinking?**
- Have you ever had a drink first thing when you wake up to steady your nerves or get rid of a hangover (also known as an **Eye opener**)?

One "yes" answer suggests a *possible* alcohol problem.

More than one "yes" means that it is *highly likely* that a problem exists.



How to Recognize a Student-Athlete Needs Help: Do You Need to Intervene?

- ❑ **Trust your instincts and take signs seriously.**
- ❑ If you experience unease about a student, it is important to pay attention to those inner signals and not disregard what you've observed.

EARLY identification and intervention **increases** successful outcomes.



How to Voice Your Concerns: How to Prepare

- **Drum up your will power!** The conversation you will have is not easy, but it IS important.
- **Be aware of difficult times:** Holidays, birthdays, anniversary dates, etc. can increase unhealthy behaviors.
- **Get sobriety on your side:** When people are under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, they will be more resistant to your efforts to confront their behaviors.
- **Get sound advice** from professional colleagues to provide you with helpful phrases and approaches (see referral section).
- **Be prepared for opportunities.** If student-athlete approaches you with a concern, this indicates he/she needs to talk. Be prepared to speak with them immediately.



How to Voice Your Concerns:

How to Share Your Concerns

- Talking about a problem does **NOT** make it worse. This is the first step toward getting help.
- Specifically point out signs you've observed and ask what is wrong.
- Keep the discussion focused on facts you have personally observed ("I saw you do [this].... I heard you say [that]") and on your emotions concerning the student-athlete's behavior ("I feel scared for you when you....").
- **For example, you could say:**
 - "I wanted to talk to you because I notice you've been late to practice recently and I'm concerned about you. Would you like to talk about it?"



How to Voice Your Concerns: While Talking to Your Student-Athlete

- **Indicate you want to help.**
- **Give your total attention** - look at the person.
- **Assure confidentiality** (within limits).
- **Keep it focused** - only address what you've personally noticed in the student's behavior – avoid hearsay .
- **Don't pile on criticism** - frame the conversation as a concern for well-being.
- **LISTEN.**
- **Ask questions only for clarification** without judgment.
- **Expect denial** (*see separate section for tips on how to handle this*).
- **Ask** if there is anything he/she needs.
- **Follow through**– help the student-athlete take next steps and be persistent.



How to Voice Your Concerns: Confidentiality



When talking with the student, **avoid making sweeping promises of confidentiality.**

- Students who are suicidal need swift professional intervention and pledges of absolute confidentiality may make this more difficult.



How to Voice Your Concerns: Careful Listening

- Many students will have trouble articulating the source of their difficulties.
- Be available.
- Show interest and offer support.
- Try not to get upset or communicate your own personal judgments.
- Be calm, receptive and serious, conveying that you can tolerate hearing about their painful feelings.
- Sometimes what a student does **NOT** say is as important as what the student **does** say. Ask additional questions to help understand the root problem.



How to Voice Your Concerns: Handling Resistance

- It's normal for someone with a substance abuse problem to deny there is a problem. When this happens, direct confrontation is not helpful.
- Instead, try one of the following approaches:
 - **Reflect** – “I know it's not easy to hear what I have to say.”
 - **Reframe** what you hear – “You're right, a lot of people on the team drink and I need your help to get them to realize how it hurts them.”
 - **Emphasize the right to disagree** – “You don't have to agree with me, I'm just asking you to consider this before you continue.”
 - **Emphasize personal choice and control**– People are likely to feel overwhelmed if they believe that their right to personal choice is being challenged. “I'm just offering information. You have the right to decide what to do.”



How to Voice Your Concerns: Making the Referral

☐ **Encourage the student to see a professional counselor.**

You may need to address the student's concerns about counseling.

- "All sessions are confidential and free of charge."
- "If you like, we can call the campus office now to set up an appointment."
- "Being willing to get help for a difficult situation is a sign of strength and intelligence."



How To Access Resources: **Take the Team Approach**

Engage appropriate athletic staff

- Team Physician
- Athletic Trainers
- Life Skill Coordinator

Build relationships with campus resources who may include:

- Clinical Sports Psychologist
- Health and Counseling Center Staff
- Alcohol/Other Drug Educator
- Dean of Students

Identify and follow existing intervention and referral protocol with athletics department and/or your counseling center.

If you plan to make a referral, communicate plan with appropriate athletics staff (sports medicine and senior administrator) and **respect the confidentiality of the student-athlete.**



How To Access Resources: **Respect Confidentiality**

- **Do not discuss the student's name or problem in public areas** OR with anyone who does not have a direct need to know this information.
- You **can** contact campus and community resources for general information on how to get the student-athlete help **without** revealing the student's name or specific problem details.



How to Access Resources

Community Resources

Use your on-campus relationships/partners to connect you with the appropriate off-campus resources.

Where to start:

- Local emergency health clinical or treatment centers
- Local mental health association
- Hospital mental health/substance abuse center

Two free national resources to find local assistance:

Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator

Sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov/

Hazelden Treatment Hotline – 866-819-1927

Fee confidential 24-hour service. Can also identify a provider in your area.



Coaches Matter!

- Addressing alcohol & other drug issues is important for performance, health and life balance.
- Treatment works!
- Coaches and administrators can provide encouragement and support.
- By addressing substance abuse, coaches and administrators show they truly care for the well-being of their student-athletes.



NCAA and Other Resources

NCAA Mental Health Handbook

www.ncaa.org/health-safety



Step Up! Bystander Intervention

www.stepupprogram.org



External Resources

BACCHUS Network

www.bacchusnetwork.org www.peoplepreventsuicide.org



Screening for Mental Health

www.mentalhealthscreening.org



Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) Institute

www.qprinstitute.com



Jed Foundation

www.jedfoundation.org www.halfofus.org

