



MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES

Prepared by: NJCAA Student-Athlete Welfare & Safety Council

INTRODUCTION

While the mental health of student-athletes was of concern before the COVID-19 pandemic, stressors typical to the two-year college student-athlete experience such as time, family and financial management are now compounded by the impact of the pandemic on personal, familial and societal levels. Intersecting this environment is the overt manifestation of entrenched racism, and acts of hatred; particularly against our Brown, Black and Asian students (who have also been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic).

For student-athletes, many of whom rely upon their teammates and coaches for support, the abrupt shift to an online environment with uncertainty as to when it will end, has exacerbated their stress and confusion. Isolation from their teammates and coaches, loss of a season, watching and living acts of political strife and racial injustice (where before, the necessity of teamwork taught them to work through these issues) have added to students' distress. All of which leads to a wide range of psychological repercussions that need to be addressed once teams return to play. Research now shows that 80% of college students claim that COVID-19 has negatively affected their mental health with 91% experiencing stress/anxiety, 81% feeling disappointed/sad, and 80% claiming loneliness/isolation (reference: Active Minds).

Two-year college athletic departments vary in their capabilities of providing mental health services to student-athletes. Therefore, the purpose of this document is to provide credible resources to assist staff in gaining knowledge of the issues and referring students for assistance.

The resources enclosed therein are not exhaustive, nor do they represent an NJCAA endorsement. However, all resources were assessed by the NJCAA Student-Athlete Welfare and Safety Council, and thereby determined to be credible and beneficial.

RESOURCES

BROAD APPLICATION

[National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#)

- Nation's largest grassroots mental health organization to assist Americans with mental illness build better lives.

[Ted Talk: Ideas about Mental Health](#)

- A collection of TED Talks on mental health.

SCHOOLS / COLLEGES

[Active Minds](#)

- Organization supporting mental health awareness and education for young adults.

[Mary Christie Institute](#)

- With an emphasis on higher education, a resource to assist students to transition leaders by examining, convening and reporting on the emotional and behavioral health of young adults.

[Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network](#)

- Mental health resources for schools.

[Safespace](#)

- A youth-led mental health organization with emphasis on education and support.

[Rachel's Challenge](#)

- A non-profit organization helping promote a positive climate in K-12 schools, making schools safer.

[HVCC Self Screening](#)

- A mental health self-screening tool provided through Hudson Valley Community College.

CULTURE AND RACE

[American Indian / Alaska Native National Resource Center for Health, Education and Research](#)

- Includes resources and information to provide culturally-appropriate prevention, treatment and education on health-related matters in Native people.

[Asian American Psychological Association](#)

- Provides resources on mental health issues in the Asian American population.

[The Asian Mental Health Project](#)

- The Project's goal is to educate and empower Asian communities in seeking mental health care.

BIPOC Mental Health Resources

- St. John's University website providing a variety of mental health resources to Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC).

The Steve Fund

- Partners with institutions to assist in their understanding of the needs, and provision of supports to students of color and other intersecting identities to ensure positive mental and emotional wellbeing.

Find a Black and African American Therapist

- A state-by-state listing for Black and African American mental health professionals in the United States.

LGBTQ+

Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals

- Provides resources to support college students of the LGBTQ and TQSOC communities.

National Queer and Trans Therapists of Color Network

- Resources and information to increase access to healing justice for QTPOC.

ATHLETES

National Athletic Trainer Association Intercollegiate Council for Sports Medicine (NATA ICSM) Mental Health Toolkit

- A Toolkit consisting of five sections ranging from guidelines on how to find an appropriate team of mental health providers to how to establish an environment to support well-being and resilience for student-athletes.

Sidelined USA

- A non-profit organization assisting athletes who have been sidelined from their athletic careers due to circumstances out of their control.

PLAN OF ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ATHLETIC DEPARTMENTS

Most athletic directors are not Mental Health professionals, nor should they assume that role if unqualified. However, this is no reason to abscond from the duty of recognizing the issues associated with Mental Health as they impact the wellbeing and performance of their student-athletes (and coaches or staff).

The following are some steps that athletic directors are encouraged to take to address Mental Health issues in their departments.

- Become educated in the issues, especially those that involve the intersection of race, culture, gender identity and socio-economic status.
- Provide education for coaching staff on these issues.
- Consider training for the administration (and coaches) to recognize warning signs that a student may be depressed and/or suicidal; and learn the college's protocol to access resources for assistance.
- Acknowledge, in a non-judgmental, pragmatic manner that coaches, and other athletic department staff may be struggling with personal mental health issues and provide them a safe space to discuss how this is impacting their performance if they so choose.
- Become cognizant of the college's employee resources to assist staff, and provide this information often, and before staff issues arise.
- Communicate with staff and student-athletes in an honest, "no-nonsense" manner acknowledging uncertainty but highlighting things you are working upon.
- Endorse "compassionate flexibility" in expectations for staff; and coaches for their student-athletes.
- Develop a mental health emergency action plan (when / who / how to contact for help).
- As athletic training and physical conditioning are accepted processes for student-athlete participation – normalize mental health to the same extent.
- Work with the college (or independently if necessary) to determine pathways internally and externally for mental health referrals.
- Ensure that all athletic department staff are aware of FERPA guidelines on the extent of dissemination of information on mental health issues (to family and others).