


Systemwide Athletics  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Rockville, Maryland

July 2017

MEMORANDUM

To: Athletic Coaches  
Athletic Directors  
Athletic Trainers

From:  Jeffrey K. Sullivan, Director, Systemwide Athletics, 240-453-2594

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, athletic directors, and athletic trainers. All of these items are available on the Health/Safety section of the MCPS Athletics web page.

**1. 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, athletic directors, athletic trainers, student-athletes, and parents. Included in the list are two documents: *Athletic Trainer Scope of Services* and *Injury Procedures for Coaches and Athletic Trainers*.

**2. Student-Athlete Health and Safety PowerPoint**

An important responsibility of coaches is educating student-athletes and parents regarding certain health and safety concerns. To assist coaches, MCPS has developed a *Student-Athlete Health and Safety PowerPoint* that covers many of the health and safety issues described below. Coaches should present this PowerPoint to student-athletes on or before the first day of practice.

Coaches also are expected to review health and safety information with parents at mandatory preseason team meetings. Parents and student-athletes must indicate during the 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.

**3. Concussions/Head Injuries**

MCPS guidelines and procedures regarding head injuries are described in the document *MCPS Concussion Plan*. Student-athletes and parents are required to document that they have reviewed specific information regarding concussions prior to participation. Schools must monitor a gradual return-to-play protocol for student-athletes who have suffered concussions.

Specific information, details, and forms regarding concussions and head injuries are included in the Concussions portion of the Health and Safety page in the Athletics section of the MCPS website.

### **Baseline Concussion Testing**

MCPS student-athletes must undergo baseline concussion testing every two years in order to participate. Student-athletes will need to be tested every two years. 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 registration process for athletics prior to testing.

### **4. Fall Heat Acclimatization**

Fall sports are subject to heat acclimatization guidelines and procedures. School systems across the state are subject to similar guidelines, including general, equipment, and activity guidelines.

Guidelines regarding heat acclimatization are described in the document *MCPS Fall Heat Plan*, located in the Heat and Hydration portion of the Health/Safety section of the Athletics webpage. Other materials related to heat and environmental factors are included in this section. MCPS guidelines for modifying practices or contests in extreme weather conditions are described in the *MCPS High School Athletics Handbook*.

### **5. 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. Information regarding hydration is available on the Hydration portion of the Health/Safety section of the MCPS Athletics web page.

### **6. MRSA (Methicillin-Resistant Staph Aureus) Information**

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 1) *Updated MRSA Recommendations for Schools and School Communities* and 2) *Fundamental Precautions Regarding Communicable Infections, Including MRSA*. Both are contained in the MRSA portion of the Health/Safety section of the MCPS Athletics web page.

### **7. Steroids and Performance Enhancing Substances**

MCPS athletic 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.

Additional information regarding steroids, including student-athlete and parent/guardian information brochures from the National Federation of High Schools (NFHS), are available in the Performance Enhancing Substances portion of the Health/Safety section of the MCPS Athletics web page.

## **8. 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** – 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.
- **Sudden Cardiac Arrest Awareness** – Coaches should discuss with student-athletes and parents 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 registration process for athletics.
- **Hazing**—Coaches should address hazing 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*.
- **Pre-participation Physical Examination**—Student-athletes must complete a current medical evaluation (MCPS form SR-8) prior to participation. Only the last page of the form (Clearance Form) needs to be submitted during the registration process for athletics. Coaches should review the information, and submit the Clearance Form to the athletic director or school nurse. Clearance forms may also be stored electronically in the online registration portal for athletics.
- **Emergency Medical Card**—Student-athletes must submit a completed Emergency Medical Card prior to participation or complete the registration process for athletics. The card should be available at all practices and contests. The Emergency Medical Card is in the Health/Safety section of the Athletics webpage and can be generated from the online registration portal for athletics.
- **Field/Facility Inspection**—Coaches and athletic directors 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.
- **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.

- Supervision of Student-Athletes—Coaches must supervise student-athletes at all times, before and after practices and contests at both home and away sites.
- Emergency Plans—Coaches should review the school emergency plan. Also, coaches should have a plan that addresses emergency situations that arise involving their team.

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

JKS:rtm

Copy to:

Dr. Zuckerman

Ms. Green

High School Principals