



Summary of the NATA Position Statement on Emergency Action Plan Development and Implementation in Sport

Emergencies in sports settings require a rapid, coordinated, and well-rehearsed response to ensure the best possible outcomes for athletes and other individuals involved. A comprehensive Emergency Action Plan (EAP) is an essential component of athletic healthcare, designed to provide structured protocols for managing life-threatening emergencies such as sudden cardiac arrest, catastrophic head and spine injuries, and exertional heat illnesses. The 2024 NATA Position Statement on EAPs highlights the importance of venue-specific plans that integrate personnel, communication strategies, emergency equipment, and rehearsal protocols to enhance preparedness and response. This statement emphasizes the importance of EAPs for optimizing patient outcomes, ensuring comprehensive planning, and facilitating rapid emergency responses.

Key Findings and Importance of EAPs

- Catastrophic injuries, including sudden cardiac arrest (SCA), traumatic brain injuries, and exertional heat stroke, require immediate intervention.
- A well-developed EAP ensures that institutions are prepared for emergencies, thereby reducing response times and improving survival rates.
- Despite recommendations, many athletic programs lack comprehensive EAPs or fail to implement them effectively.

Why EAPs are Essential

- **Reduces response time** in life-threatening emergencies (e.g., sudden cardiac arrest, spinal injuries).
- Improves **coordination between athletic staff, medical professionals, and EMS**.
- Ensures **compliance with legal and regulatory standards**, reducing liability risks.
- Enhances **athlete safety and institutional preparedness**.

Recommendations for EAP Development and Implementation

The NATA provides 25 recommendations categorized into four primary areas: optimizing patient outcomes, development, implementation, and response.

Optimizing Patient Outcomes

1. Institutions/Organizations must develop written EAPs for all athletic activities.
2. EAPs should be sport- and venue-specific.
3. Institutions/Organizations should provide training on the management of catastrophic injuries.

Development of EAPs

4. Designate an EAP coordinator responsible for oversight.
5. Evaluate facility-specific safety considerations.

6. Clearly define the chain of command and stakeholder responsibilities.
7. Involve an interdisciplinary health care team in EAP creation.

Implementation of EAPs

8. Distribute the EAP to stakeholders annually.
9. Review the EAP at least once a year.
10. Conduct hands-on rehearsals of the EAP annually.
11. Document all EAP rehearsals, including participant details and scenarios.
12. Collaborate with emergency responders during EAP development.
13. Ensure the EAP is readily accessible at all venues.
14. Obtain approval from institutional leadership before implementation.
15. Require all athletic trainers (ATs) to review the EAP when joining an organization.
16. Conduct debriefings after emergency events to improve future responses.
17. Implement Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) for responders after catastrophic events.
18. Maintain thorough documentation of emergency events and EAP activation.

Emergency Response Procedures

19. Conduct pre-event medical meetings to discuss EAP activation procedures.
20. Perform daily readiness checks of the venue, equipment, and personnel.
21. Ensure emergency equipment, such as Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs), is accessible and well-maintained.
22. Position an AED within a 3-minute retrieval time at all sports venues.
23. Conduct a rapid initial assessment of injured athletes.
24. Activate the EAP immediately upon identifying a serious emergency.
25. Contact emergency responders as soon as the EAP is activated.

Conclusion

The NATA stresses that developing, distributing, and practicing an EAP is crucial for ensuring athlete safety and reducing errors during emergency situations. Institutions should continually review and refine their EAPs to align with best practices and improve emergency preparedness in sports settings.

Emergency Preparedness Roles and Responsibilities

Professional Setting

Key Personnel

 Medical Personnel Involved in EAP: ☐ _____

 Non-Medical Personnel Involved in EAP: ☐ _____

 EAP Coordinator: ☐ _____

Emergency Scene Management

 Who stabilizes the scene for the AT to work safely? ☐ _____

 Primary provider of medical care in an emergency? ☐ _____

 Who initiates the EAP? ☐ _____

 Who calls EMS? ☐ _____

 Who retrieves emergency equipment (AED, spine board, splints)? ☐ _____

 Who meets the ambulance and guides EMS to the injured individual? ☐ _____

 Who assists in crowd control and maintains a clear emergency pathway? ☐ _____

Communication Responsibilities

 Who communicates with the following?

 Family Members: ☐ _____

 Players: ☐ _____

 Media: ☐ _____

 Game Day Officials: ☐ _____

 Organization/League Health & Safety Personnel: ☐ _____

 Public Safety/Police/Crowd Control: ☐ _____

 Coaching Staff: ☐ _____

 Who accompanies the patient to the hospital? ☐ _____