

Emergency Action Plan (EAP) for Sports Settings

An Emergency Action Plan is crucial for ensuring rapid, organized response to medical emergencies in athletic environments. This guide outlines why EAPs matter, what they should include, and how to implement them effectively to protect athletes and reduce liability.



What is an Emergency Action Plan?

Written Document

Comprehensive guidelines that outline procedures for handling medical emergencies in sports settings

Rapid Response

Designed to ensure organized and effective care during critical situations

Life-Saving Tool

Enables quick action when every second counts in life-threatening emergencies



Why EAPs Are Critical in Sports



Faster Emergency Response

Reduces critical delays when seconds matter in life-threatening situations



Role Clarity

Assigns specific duties to athletic trainers, coaches, and staff, eliminating confusion during crises



Legal & Ethical Compliance

Meets best-practice standards and reduces organizational liability



Improved Communication

Ensures coordinated efforts between on-site responders and emergency medical services

Enhanced Athlete Safety Outcomes



Faster Care Delivery

Seconds saved in emergency response can significantly improve survival rates



Risk Minimization

Proactive planning reduces potential complications during emergencies



Team Preparedness

Well-rehearsed staff respond more effectively under pressure

Key Components of an Effective EAP

1

Venue- and Sport-Specific Planning

Detailed maps showing EMS access points, emergency exits, and equipment locations with roles and responsibilities per sport

2

Defined Personnel Roles

Clear assignments for who activates EMS, performs CPR, retrieves emergency equipment such as AEDs, and manages the scene

3

Emergency Equipment Readiness

Regular checks of equipment such as ensuring AEDs, splints, and spine boards are accessible and functional

4

EMS Coordination

Established direct communication protocols with local emergency responders

Equipment & Resource Preparation

Essential Emergency Equipment (examples)

- AEDs (Automated External Defibrillators)
- Spine boards and cervical collars
- Cold water immersion tubs
- First aid kits and trauma supplies
- Splints and immobilization devices

Communication Resources

- Charged mobile phones or radios
- Emergency contact list
- Venue address and access details
- Athlete medical information

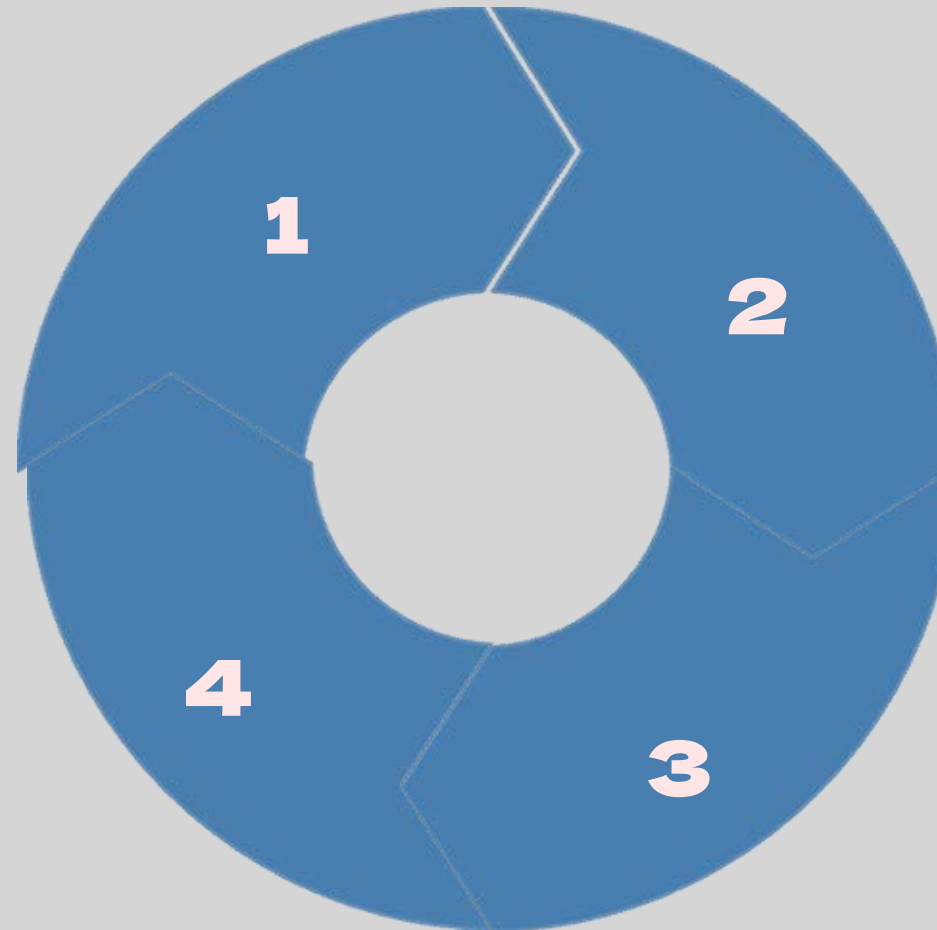
Regular Review & Practice

Annual EAP Review

Update protocols based on facility changes and new best practices

Staff Training

Ensure all personnel maintain current certification in CPR and first aid



Emergency Simulations

Conduct regular drills to improve reaction time and teamwork

EMS Collaboration

Meet with local emergency services to review access points and procedures

Regular practice sessions transform written plans into muscle memory, ensuring faster response when real emergencies occur.

Implementation Checklist

Develop Written Plan

Create venue- and sport-specific documents with clear procedures and responsibilities

Distribute to All Staff

Ensure everyone has access to the plan and understands their role

Conduct Initial Training

Practice emergency scenarios and familiarize staff with equipment locations

Schedule Regular Drills

Set up quarterly or seasonal practice sessions to maintain readiness

Be Proactive. Be Prepared. Save Lives. Implementing a comprehensive EAP isn't just a best practice—it's a vital component of responsible athletic program management.



Catastrophic Injuries in High School and College Sports

This presentation examines data from the National Center for Catastrophic Sport Injury Research (NCCSIR) covering 41 years of catastrophic injuries in organized high school and collegiate sports. We'll explore the trends, risk factors, and most affected sports to better understand these rare but serious events.



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Current Year Summary (2022-2023)

1 Total Catastrophic Events

113 catastrophic injuries/illnesses were captured among high school and college athletes. Of these, 92 events were sport-related, with 83% occurring at the high school level and 88% affecting males.

2 Injury Outcomes

18.5% of events were fatal, 8.7% resulted in permanent disability, 56.5% were serious with recovery, and 15.2% had unknown outcomes. Events were evenly split between traumatic injuries (50%) and exertional/medical conditions (50%).

3 Most Affected Sports

Football (54.3%), basketball (15.2%), track and field (5.4%), soccer (5.4%), and baseball (4.3%) accounted for most catastrophic events. The heart (45.7%), spine (20.7%), and head/brain (19.6%) were the most commonly affected body areas.



Traumatic Injury Events (Direct)

1

Characteristics

Of the 46 traumatic injury events, 8.7% were fatal, 17.4% resulted in permanent disability, 43.5% were serious with recovery, and 30.4% had unknown outcomes. Most occurred during competition (84.8%) rather than practice (10.9%).

2

Mechanisms

Contact with another player was the leading cause (50%), followed by contact with ground/surface (10.9%) and apparatus/object (8.7%). Tackling/being tackled accounted for 30.4% of these injuries.

3

Affected Areas & Sports

The spine (41.3%) and head/brain (39.1%) were most frequently injured. Football dominated with 73.9% of all traumatic injuries, followed by baseball (8.7%) and ice hockey (4.3%).

Exertional/Medical Events (Indirect)

1

Characteristics

Of the 46 exertional/medical events, 28.3% were fatal while 69.6% recovered. These events occurred equally during practice (41.3%) and competition (41.3%). Running (19.5%) and conditioning (4.3%) were the most common activities.

2

Types of Events

The vast majority were cardiac-related (89.1%), followed by heat-related (8.7%). There were 4 heat stroke events in 2022/23, comparable to 4 in 2021/22 and 7 in 2020/21, but fewer than the 10 recorded in 2018/19.

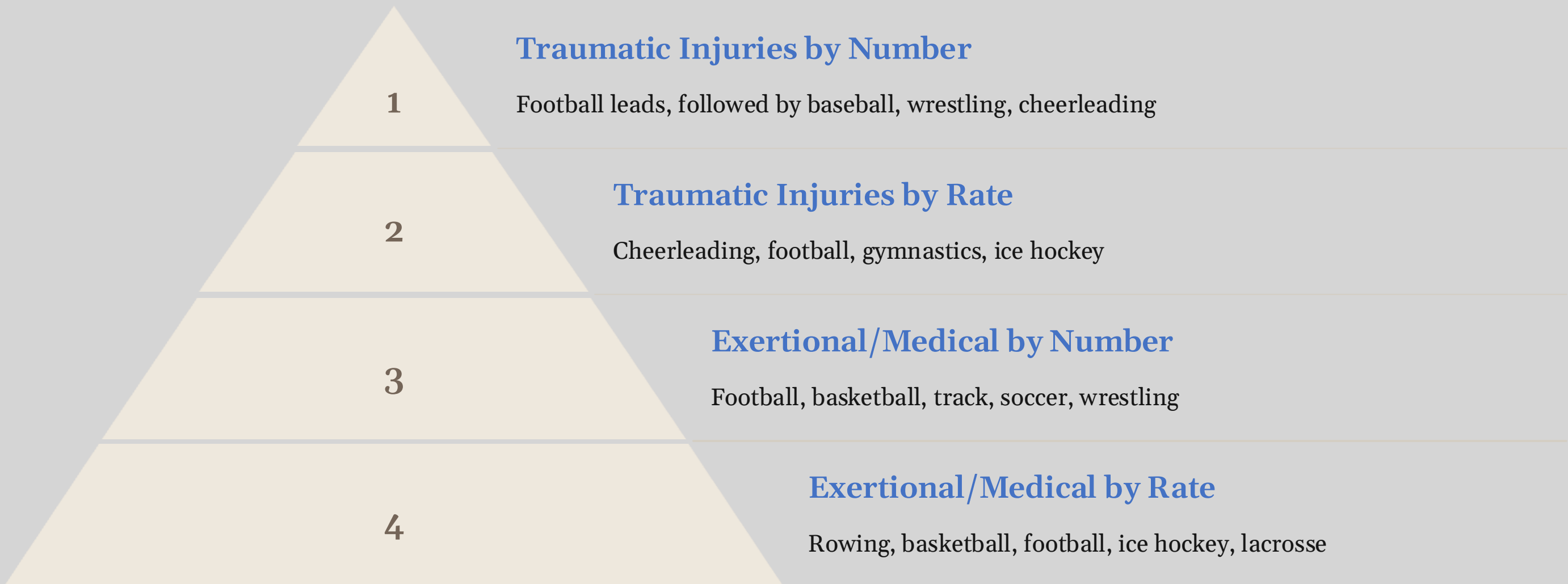
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Affected Sports

Football (34.8%) and basketball (28.3%) accounted for most exertional/medical events, followed by track and field (10.9%) and soccer (6.5%).



High School Sports: Highest Risk Activities



When examining high school sports, football consistently appears as high-risk across all measures. However, when accounting for participation rates, several other sports show significant risk. For traumatic injuries, cheerleading and gymnastics have concerning rates, while for exertional/medical conditions, basketball and rowing show elevated risk.

College Sports: Highest Risk Activities



Football

Highest number of both traumatic and exertional/medical catastrophic events. For traumatic injuries, the rate is 0.70 fatal events per 100,000 participants, with 2.21 non-fatal and 6.68 serious events per 100,000.



Basketball

Male basketball has the highest rate of exertional/medical events at 6.53 fatal events per 100,000 participants. It also ranks high for traumatic injuries with 1.40 serious events per 100,000.



Skiing

Female skiing has the highest rate of fatal traumatic injuries at 5.05 per 100,000 participants. Male skiing also shows high rates for both traumatic and exertional/medical events.



Gymnastics

Male gymnastics has the highest rate of serious traumatic injuries at 9.42 per 100,000 participants, while female gymnastics shows high rates of both fatal and non-fatal injuries.

Key Takeaways and Recommendations

3,174

Total Events

Catastrophic sport-related injuries over 41 years of data collection, with 79% occurring at the high school level.

92

2022-23 Events

Sport-related catastrophic events in the most recent academic year, higher than the previous three years.

50%

Cardiac Events

Nearly half of all catastrophic events are cardiac-related, highlighting the importance of cardiac screening and AED availability.

54.3%

Football Events

Football accounts for over half of all catastrophic events, suggesting targeted safety interventions are needed.

Catastrophic events remain rare in sports, but their impact is significant. Continued monitoring and research are essential to develop effective prevention strategies. Special attention should be given to high-risk sports like football, basketball, and cheerleading, with focus on preventing head/spine injuries and cardiac events.

