



Introduction:

Mental wellness is an important part of overall health and wellness, yet, there is a growing increase of mental illnesses in young adults 18-25 years old. Approximately 1 in every 4 youths in America meets the criteria for a mental health disorder and can experience severe impairment across a lifetime (NATA Consensus Statement). These numbers indicate that as Athletic Trainers and Coaches, we will encounter student-athletes with mental health issues and, as such, we need to be well versed in the necessary steps to ensure the proper care and safety of the student-athlete and others.

The following document outlines mental health related information and the action steps to take in certain events. It is not possible to cover every plausible scenario in this document so it is important to understand some basic guidelines such as who to contact when there is concern for a student-athlete's mental health.

Mental wellness:

A state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.

Mental illness:

Collectively all diagnosable mental illnesses are characterized by alterations in thinking, mood, or behavior (or some combination thereof) and are associated with a level of distress and/or impaired functioning.

Early Warning Signs:

Experiencing one or more of the following feelings or behaviors can be an early warning sign of a problem:

- Eating or sleeping too much or too little
- Pulling away from people and usual activities
- Having low or no energy
- Feeling numb or like nothing matters
- Having unexplained aches and pains
- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Smoking, drinking, or using drugs more than usual
- Feeling unusually confused, forgetful, on edge, angry, upset, worried, or scared
- Yelling or fighting with family and friends
- Having persistent thoughts and memories you can't get out of your head
- Hearing voices or believing things that are not true
- Thinking of harming yourself or others
- Inability to perform daily tasks like getting to work or school

Signs and Symptoms that require Immediate Attention:

- Thoughts or plans of killing or hurting oneself or others
- Hearing voices or seeing things that no one else can see or hear
- Unexplained changes in thinking, speech or writing
- Being overly suspicious or fearful
- Serious drop in school performance
- Sudden personality changes that are bizarre or out of character

Screening Procedure:

Prior to participation in ERAU Athletics each semester, all student-athletes will be required to complete the mental health screening questionnaires included in their annual physical paperwork located on PRIVIT. The screening tools to be completed are the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) and the Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7). The PHQ-9 and GAD-7 questionnaires will be sent out to student-athletes an additional two times each semester, and the student-athletes are encouraged to complete them as a check-in. Once around the middle of the semester, and once at the end of the semester prior to finals. The scores for each questionnaire will be evaluated by the Sports Medicine Staff, and student-athletes will be categorized into one of three levels of risk. The levels of risk will be assigned as green, yellow, or red.

The Sports Medicine Staff, along with Team Physicians, will use the following tables to calculate a score for each questionnaire on the student-athletes physical paperwork, and assign a level of risk. If a student-athlete falls into different levels of risk for each questionnaire, the student-athlete will be assigned to the higher-level risk category.

PHQ-9 Scoring

Score	Depression severity	Action	ERAU Risk Category
0-4	Minimal or none	No action necessary	Green
5-9	Mild	Monitor	Yellow
10-14	Moderate	Possible clinical significance	Red
15-19	Moderately severe	Warrants active treatment with psychotherapy, medications, or combination	Red

GAD-7 Scoring

Score	Symptom Severity	Action	ERAU Risk Category
0-4	Minimal or none	No action necessary	Green
5-9	Mild	Monitor	Yellow
10-14	Moderate	Possible clinically significant condition	Red
>15	Severe	Active treatment probably warranted	Red

Once the questionnaires have been evaluated and level of risk has been assigned, the appropriate steps will be taken according to their risk category. Those actions have been defined as:

GREEN: low level of risk, no action needs to be taken at this time.

YELLOW: mild/moderate risk, student-athlete may be referred to the Counseling Center. The Sports Medicine Staff will inform the following individuals regarding student-athletes who have been flagged as yellow level of risk.

- Mea Felps-Darley, Assistant Athletics Director Compliance/SWA
- Head Coach of flagged student-athlete(s)

RED: high risk, student-athlete is referred to the Counseling Center. The Sports Medicine Staff will inform the following individuals regarding student-athletes who have been flagged as red level of risk.

- Dean of Students
- Mea Felps-Darley, Assistant Athletics Director Compliance/SWA
- Head Coach of flagged student-athlete(s)

Documentation and Communication:

New and returning student-athletes

- Mental health issues will be noted in medical folder
- Mental health issues will be communicated to coach to ensure the best medical care and awareness.

Recruits and tryouts

- Pertinent medical information including mental health issues will be in email to coaches for clearance
 - This will allow coaches to be aware of any issues during campus visit

Non-Emergent Mental Health Event:

Coaches that have a concern about the mental health of a student-athlete or if a student-athlete reveals that they are dealing with mental health issues, should report concerns to the Rex Sharp, Director of Sports Medicine or Mea Felps-Darley, Associate Athletics Director Compliance/SWA. The Director of Sports Medicine or Mea Felps-Darley will be the main contact and will facilitate care and communication with administration. The student-athlete should be informed that ERAU athletic staff members are required by law to report conversation to an administrator. If student-athlete chooses not to talk to an athletic staff member, the Counseling Center, Wellness Services, or Center for Faith & Spirituality are areas that are not required to report conversation. If student-athlete decides to talk with an ERAU athletic staff member, the following is a guideline for conversing with distressed student-athlete.

TALKING TO A DISTRESSED STUDENT-ATHLETE:

- Talk to the student-athlete in private
- Listen to the student-athlete and respond in neutral manner
- Remain calm and reassuring
- Ask student-athlete if he/she/they has thoughts of suicide. **If they answer yes, refer to steps below for suicidal/self-harm risk.**
- Validate the student-athlete's feelings and experiences
- Be supportive and express your concern about the student-athlete's situation
- Ask general questions but do not go into detail. You want to limit how many times the student-athlete needs to tell the story.
- Ask if there is someone that they would like to talk to and that they trust.
- Ask if they or a family member have ever had a mental-health issue.
- If staff member feels overwhelmed or unprepared to help the student-athlete, call the Counseling Center (386-226-6035) or the Dean of Students (386-226-6326) for a consultation and/or refer the student-athlete for counseling services.
- **Contact Rex Sharp, Director of Sports Medicine**, to inform him of the situation.
- Instruct the student-athlete to contact Counseling Center, Wellness Services or Center for Faith & Spirituality if needed. Walk student-athlete to facility if needed.
- A report should be filed in sports medicine medical software of the meeting with the athlete and the details presented.

IF STUDENT-ATHLETE EXPRESSES THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE OR SELF-HARM

- Ask student-athlete if they feel suicidal or might harm themselves.
- Respond neutral.
- Do not leave student-athlete alone.
- Take the student-athlete's disclosure as a serious plea for help.
- Ask student-athlete directly about feelings and plans
 - Are you thinking of killing yourself?
 - How have you thought about doing it?
 - Do you have access to the means to harm yourself?
- Express care and concern. Let them know they are not alone, and you will help them get professional support.
- If the incident occurs during business hours (9:00 AM-5:00 PM), if the student-athlete is willing and open to support, escort the student-athlete to the Counseling Center located in the Wellness Center, Bldg #502.
- If student-athlete refuses support care from the Counseling Center, but there is significant concern for the safety of the student, contact campus safety (386-226-7233) or local law enforcement (911)
- May also use **SUICIDE HOTLINE 1-800-273-8255, Campus Safety or 911** when the Counseling Center is not open.
- Stay with the student-athlete until care is given. If the student-athlete is not with you try to find out if someone can stay with them.
- After student-athlete has been brought to appropriate facility and care is given, document information in sports medicine medical software.
- **ALL THREATS MUST BE CONSIDERED POTENTIALLY LETHAL.**

Important Contact Phone Numbers:

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| • Suicide Prevention Hotline | 800-273-8255 |
| • Veterans Crisis Line | 800-273-8255 (Press 1) |
| • Rape Crisis Hotline | 800-503-7621 |
| • Domestic Violence Hotline | 800-799-7233 |
| • Campus Safety | 386-226-7233 |
| • Counseling Center | 386-226-6035 |
| • Center for Faith & Spirituality | 386-226-6326 (Open 6 AM – 10 PM) |
| • Housing | 386-323-8000 |
| • Linda Dammer | 386-226-7971 (Title IX Coordinator) |
| • Rex Sharp, ATC | 386-226-6527 (Director of Sports Medicine) |
| • John Phillips | 386-323-5020 (Director of Athletics) |
| • Mea Felps-Darley | 386-226-4917 (Associate Athletics Director Compliance/SWA) |
| • Lisa Kollar | 386-226-7068 (Dean of Students) |
| • Teresa Michaelson | 386-226-6905 (Director of Counseling Center) |

Getting Help

- **REPORTING STUDENT OF CONCERN**
 - ERNIE > Departments > Dean of Students (Daytona) > Forms > **Student of Concern**
 - May also call housing for wellness check (386-323-8000)

There are many resources available to those in need:

- Immediate Crisis Intervention call 800-273-TALK (8255)
- Team Physician (Halifax Family and Sports Medicine)
- Sports Medicine staff
- ERAU Counseling Center
- ERAU Center for Faith & Spirituality

Student-Athlete Burnout

A syndrome of continual training and sport attention stress, resulting in staleness, overtraining and, eventually burnout. Many student-athletes experiencing burnout report feeling trapped by circumstances of sports participation. Some signs and symptoms of burnout include:

- Leveling off or diminished performance or conditioning, including strength and stamina losses and chronic fatigue.
- Physiological signs such as having a higher resting heart rate and blood pressure.
- Cognitive issues such as difficulty in concentration, diminished work in school or forgetfulness.
- Illnesses as a result of suppressed immune system.
- Emotional issues such as disinterest, moodiness and irritability.
- Low self-esteem, increased anxiety and depression as a result of falling short of sport demands.
- The best method to prevent and treat student-athlete burnout:
 - Rest
 - Time away from sports

References: www.cdc.gov/mentalwellness/basics.htm / www.mentalwellness.gov/basics/what-is-mental-wellness

ERAU Athletics Response Protocol

Emergency

Suicide Attempt
Suicide Threat
Sexual Assault

Non-Emergency

Anxiety
Depression
Suicidal Thoughts

After Hours

- Call 911
- Call Campus Safety
226-SAFE (7233)
- Rape Crisis Center
1-800-503-7621
- SMA Crisis Response
Helpline
1-800-539-4228
- Suicide Prevention
Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Sexual Assault Helpline
1-800-503-7621

Transport to hospital
(if you are comfortable)

After Hours

- Call Campus Safety
226-SAFE (7233)
- SMA Crisis Response
Helpline
1-800-539-4228
- Suicide Prevention
Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK (8255)

ERAU Resources Available During WorkHours

ERAU Counseling Center	386-226-6035
ERAU Health Services	386-226-7917
ERAU Title IX Office	386-226-7971
ERAU Campus Chaplain	386-226-6580

*Please communicate with Justin White or Sonja Taylor
regarding any mental wellness or related crises.*



Grief and Loss Support

There is no need to face grief alone.



You are not alone

If you're grieving following the loss of a loved one, you don't have to deal with it alone. There are resources to support you through the grief process.

Virtual Support Groups

The Dinner Party

www.thedinnerparty.org

"The Dinner Party is building a worldwide community of 20- and 30-somethings who have each experienced the loss of a parent, partner, child, sibling, other close family member or close friend."

Grief and Bereavement Services

Halifax Health

www.halifaxhealth.org

"Our comprehensive Bereavement (Grief Support) Program is committed to offering grief support to those who have had a loved one die under our care. This can last up to a year following the death or sometimes longer. We also extend our services to persons in the community who have had a death in their family."

GriefShare

<https://www.griefshare.org/>

"GriefShare is a grief recovery support group where you can find help and healing for the hurt of losing a loved one."

Individual Counseling

Open Doors Counseling Network

opendoorscounselingnetwork.com

The mission of *Open Doors Counseling Network* is to offer professional, affordable counseling to people in need, and to provide a supportive place for students and counselors to practice and train. (Faith-based)

Faculty and Staff EAP

For ERAU Faculty and Staff, the university provides an Employee Assistance Program that can help you cope with these trying times. *ERNIE > Home > Departments > Human Resources > Employee Engagement > Employee Resources*

Psychology Today

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists>

Psychology today has resources that can connect you with a mental health professional in your area.

EMBRY-RIDDLE
Aeronautical University

Counseling Center
386-226-6035