



STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: January 9, 2018  
To: Chief School Administrators, Charter School and Renaissance School Project Leads,  
Administrators of Approved Private Schools for Students with Disabilities, Nonpublic School  
Administrators  
Route To: Principals, School Nurses, Athletic Directors, Athletic Trainers, Coaches  
From: Peggy McDonald, Acting Assistant Commissioner  
Division of Learning Supports and Specialized Services  
Deadline: March 2, 2018

### **Opioid Use and Misuse Fact Sheet and Sign-Off Sheet**

In accordance with *N.J.S.A. 18A:40-41.10*, public school districts, approved private schools for students with disabilities, and nonpublic schools participating in an interscholastic sports program must distribute the *Opioid Use and Misuse Educational Fact Sheet* to all student-athletes and cheerleaders. In addition, schools and districts must obtain a signed acknowledgement of receipt of the fact sheet from each student-athlete and cheerleader, and for students under age 18, the parent or guardian must also sign.

In accordance with the law, the fact sheet must be distributed and a sign-off sheet completed and collected for each student-athlete or cheerleader prior to the first official practice session of the spring 2018 athletic season (March 2, as designated by the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association), and annually thereafter prior to the student's first official practice of the school year. For the convenience of school officials, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) has designed a template sign-off form. This sign-off form cannot be combined with any other sign-off sheets that students or parents are required to complete.

These forms, as well as a text-only version of the Opioid Use and Misuse Fact Sheet, can be found on the NJDOE's Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drug Use webpage.

#### **Background**

In July 2017, Governor Christie signed into law *P.L. 2017, c.167*, which requires the NJDOE to develop a fact sheet containing information on the use and misuse of opioid drugs in the event that a health care provider prescribes a student-athlete or cheerleader an opioid for a sports-related injury. The law also requires student-athletes (and their parents, if the student is under age 18) to annually sign an acknowledgement of receipt of the fact sheet. The fact sheet was developed by the NJDOE in consultation with the New Jersey Department of Health, the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association, and Karan Chauhan, a student at Parsippany Hills High School who serves as the student representative to the State Board of Education.

#### **Contact Information**

Questions may be directed to [healthyschools@doe.state.nj.us](mailto:healthyschools@doe.state.nj.us).

c: Members, State Board of Education  
Kimberley Harrington, Commissioner  
NJDOE Staff  
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network  
Garden State Coalition of Schools  
NJ LEE Group

# OPIOID USE AND MISUSE EDUCATIONAL FACT SHEET

## Keeping Student-Athletes Safe

School athletics can serve an integral role in students' development. In addition to providing healthy forms of exercise, school athletics foster friendships and camaraderie, promote sportsmanship and fair play, and instill the value of competition.

Unfortunately, sports activities may also lead to injury and, in rare cases, result in pain that is severe or long-lasting enough to require a prescription opioid painkiller.<sup>1</sup> It is important to understand that overdoses from opioids are on the rise and are killing Americans of all ages and backgrounds. Families and communities across the country are coping with the health, emotional and economic effects of this epidemic.<sup>2</sup>

This educational fact sheet, created by the New Jersey Department of Education as required by state law (N.J.S.A. 18A:40-41.10), provides information concerning the use and misuse of opioid drugs in the event that a health care provider prescribes a student-athlete or cheerleader an opioid for a sports-related injury. Student-athletes and cheerleaders participating in an interscholastic sports program (and their parent or guardian, if the student is under age 18) must provide their school district written acknowledgment of their receipt of this fact sheet.

### How Do Athletes Obtain Opioids?

In some cases, student-athletes are prescribed these medications. According to research, about a third of young people studied obtained pills from their own previous prescriptions (i.e., an unfinished prescription used outside of a physician's supervision), and 83 percent of adolescents had unsupervised access to their prescription medications.<sup>3</sup> It is important for parents to understand the possible hazard of having unsecured prescription medications in their households. Parents should also understand the importance of proper storage and disposal of medications, even if they believe their child would not engage in non-medical use or diversion of prescription medications.

### What Are Signs of Opioid Use?

According to the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, 12 percent of male athletes and 8 percent of female athletes had used prescription opioids in the 12-month period studied.<sup>3</sup> In the early stages of abuse, the athlete may exhibit unprovoked nausea and/or vomiting. However, as he or she develops a tolerance to the drug, those signs will diminish. Constipation is not uncommon, but may not be reported. One of the most significant indications of a possible opioid addiction is an athlete's decrease in academic or athletic performance, or a lack of interest in his or her sport. If these warning signs are noticed, best practices call for the student to be referred to the appropriate professional for screening,<sup>4</sup> such as provided through an evidence-based practice to identify problematic use, abuse and dependence on illicit drugs (e.g., Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT)) offered through the New Jersey Department of Health.

## What Are Some Ways Opioid Use and Misuse Can Be Prevented?

According to the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA) Sports Medical Advisory Committee chair, John P. Kripsak, D.O., "Studies indicate that about 80 percent of heroin users started out by abusing narcotic painkillers."

The Sports Medical Advisory Committee, which includes representatives of NJSIAA member schools as well as experts in the field of healthcare and medicine, recommends the following:

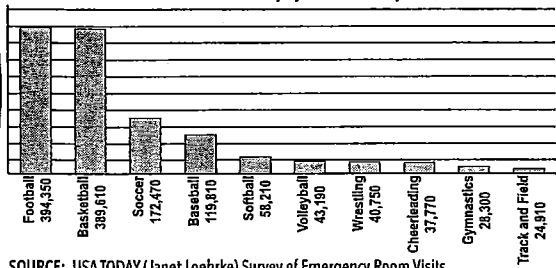
- The pain from most sports-related injuries can be managed with non-narcotic medications such as acetaminophen, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications like ibuprofen, naproxen or aspirin. Read the label carefully and always take the recommended dose, or follow your doctor's instructions. More is not necessarily better when taking an over-the-counter (OTC) pain medication, and it can lead to dangerous side effects.
- Ice therapy can be utilized appropriately as an anesthetic.
- Always discuss with your physician exactly what is being prescribed for pain and request to avoid narcotics.
- Tramadol, a non-opioid analgesic in the serotonin uptake inhibitor category, is a good choice should the previously listed options be insufficient to relieve pain.
- In extreme cases, such as severe trauma or post-surgical pain, opioid pain medication should not be prescribed for more than five days at a time;
- Parents or guardians should always control the dispensing of pain medications and keep them in a safe, non-accessible location; and
- Unused medications should be disposed of immediately upon cessation of use. Ask your pharmacist about drop-off locations or home disposal kits like Deterra or Medsaway.

According to NJSIAA Sports Medical Advisory Committee chair, John P. Kripsak, D.O., "Studies indicate that about 80 percent of heroin users started out by abusing narcotic painkillers."



**Number of Injuries Nationally in 2012 Among Athletes 19 and Under from 10 Popular Sports**

(Based on data from U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's National Electronic Injury Surveillance System)



SOURCE: USA TODAY (Janet Loehrlke) Survey of Emergency Room Visits

**Even With Proper Training and Prevention, Sports Injuries May Occur**

There are two kinds of sports injuries. Acute injuries happen suddenly, such as a sprained ankle or strained back. Chronic injuries may happen after someone plays a sport or exercises over a long period of time, even when applying overuse-preventative techniques.<sup>5</sup>

Athletes should be encouraged to speak up about injuries, coaches should be supported in injury-prevention decisions, and parents and young athletes are encouraged to become better educated about sports safety.<sup>6</sup>

**What Are Some Ways to Reduce the Risk of Injury?**

Half of all sports medicine injuries in children and teens are from overuse. An overuse injury is damage to a bone, muscle, ligament, or tendon caused by repetitive stress without allowing time for the body to heal. Children and teens are at increased risk for overuse injuries because growing bones are less resilient to stress. Also, young athletes may not know that certain symptoms are signs of overuse.

The best way to deal with sports injuries is to keep them from happening in the first place. Here are some recommendations to consider:



**PREPARE** Obtain the preparticipation physical evaluation prior to participation on a school-sponsored interscholastic or intramural athletic team or squad.



**CONDITIONING** Maintain a good fitness level during the season and offseason. Also important are proper warm-up and cooldown exercises.



**PLAY SMART** Try a variety of sports and consider specializing in one sport before late adolescence to help avoid overuse injuries.



**ADEQUATE HYDRATION** Keep the body hydrated to help the heart more easily pump blood to muscles, which helps muscles work efficiently.



**TRAINING** Increase weekly training time, mileage or repetitions no more than 10 percent per week. For example, if running 10 miles one week, increase to 11 miles the following week. Athletes should also cross-train and perform sport-specific drills in different ways, such as running in a swimming pool instead of only running on the road.



**REST UP** Take at least one day off per week from organized activity to recover physically and mentally. Athletes should take a combined three months off per year from a specific sport (may be divided throughout the year in one-month increments). Athletes may remain physically active during rest periods through alternative low-stress activities such as stretching, yoga or walking.



**PROPER EQUIPMENT** Wear appropriate and properly fitted protective equipment such as pads (neck, shoulder, elbow, chest, knee, and shin), helmets, mouthpieces, face guards, protective cups, and eyewear. Do not assume that protective gear will prevent all injuries while performing more dangerous or risky activities.

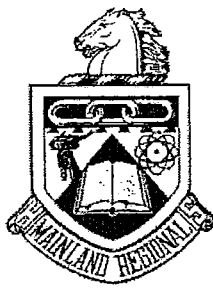
**Resources for Parents and Students on Preventing Substance Misuse and Abuse**

The following list provides some examples of resources:

- National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence - NJ promotes addiction treatment and recovery.
- New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services has a mission to decrease the abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs by supporting the development of a comprehensive network of prevention, intervention and treatment services in New Jersey.
- New Jersey Prevention Network includes a parent's quiz on the effects of opioids.
- Operation Prevention Parent Toolkit is designed to help parents learn more about the opioid epidemic, recognize warning signs, and open lines of communication with their children and those in the community.
- Parent to Parent NJ is a grassroots coalition for families and children struggling with alcohol and drug addiction.
- Partnership for a Drug Free New Jersey is New Jersey's anti-drug alliance created to localize and strengthen drug-prevention media efforts to prevent unlawful drug use, especially among young people.
- ReachNJ provides information for parents and families, including addiction and treatment stories.
- The Science of Addiction: The Stories of Teens shares common misconceptions about opioids through the voices of teens.
- Youth IMPACTing NJ is made up of youth representatives from coalitions across the state of New Jersey who have been impacting their communities and peers by spreading the word about the dangers of underage drinking, marijuana use, and other substance misuse.

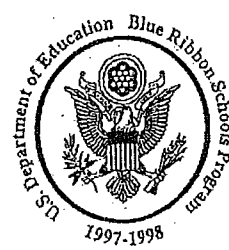
**References**<sup>1</sup> Massachusetts Technical Assistance Partnership for Prevention  
<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
<sup>3</sup> New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA) Sports Medical Advisory Committee (SMAC)  
<sup>4</sup> Athletic Management, David Csillan, athletic trainer, Ewing High School, NJSIAA SMAC  
<sup>5</sup> National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases  
<sup>6</sup> USA TODAY  
American Academy of Pediatrics

An online version of this fact sheet developed in January 2018 is available on the New Jersey Department of Education's Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use webpage.



# MAINLAND REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

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**Kim Jensen**  
Business Administrator

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Principal

## Use and Misuse of Opioid Drugs Fact Sheet

### Student-Athlete and Parent/Guardian Sign-Off

In accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:40-41.10, public school districts, approved private schools for students with disabilities, and nonpublic schools participating in an interscholastic sports program must distribute this Opioid Use and Misuse Educational Fact Sheet to all student-athletes and cheerleaders. In addition, schools and districts must obtain a signed acknowledgement of receipt of the fact sheet from each student-athlete and cheerleader, and for students under age 18, the parent or guardian must also sign.

This sign-off sheet is due to the appropriate school personnel as determined by your district prior to the first official practice session of the spring 2018 athletic season (March 2, 2018, as determined by the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association) and annually thereafter prior to the student-athlete's or cheerleader's first official practice of the school year.

Name of School: **Mainland Regional High School**

Name of School District (if applicable): **Mainland Regional High School**

I/We acknowledge that we received and reviewed the Educational Fact Sheet on the Use and Misuse of Opioid Drugs.

**Student Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Parent/Guardian Signature (also needed if student is under age 18)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

<sup>1</sup>Does not include athletic clubs or intramural events.