

**SFUSD ATHLETICS/CIF SAN FRANCISCO SECTION  
SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST INFORMATION SHEET**

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## **Keep Their Heart In the Game**

### **A Sudden Cardiac Arrest Information Sheet for Athletes and Parents/Guardians**

#### **What is sudden cardiac arrest?**

Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is when the heart stops beating, suddenly and unexpectedly. When this happens blood stops flowing to the brain and other vital organs. SCA is NOT a heart attack. A heart attack is caused by a blockage that stops the flow of blood to the heart. SCA is a malfunction in the heart's electrical system, causing the heart to suddenly stop beating and the victim to collapse. The malfunction is caused by a congenital or genetic defect in the heart's structure.

#### **How common is sudden cardiac arrest in the United States?**

As the leading cause of death in the U.S., there are more than 300,000 cardiac arrests outside hospitals each year, with nine out of 10 resulting in death. Thousands of sudden cardiac arrests occur among youth, as it is the number two cause of death under 25 and the number one killer of student athletes.

#### **TREATMENT – make this a sidebar of the cardiac chain of survival from our brochure**

#### **What is an AED? – another sidebar or color box**

An automated external defibrillator (AED) is the only way to save a sudden cardiac arrest victim. An AED is a portable, user-friendly device that automatically diagnoses potentially life-threatening heart rhythms and delivers an electric shock to restore normal rhythm. Anyone can operate an AED, regardless of training. Simple audio direction instructs the rescuer when to press a button to deliver the shock, while other AEDs provide an automatic shock if a fatal heart rhythm is detected. A rescuer cannot accidentally hurt a victim with an AED—quick action can only help. AEDs are designed to only shock victims whose hearts need to be restored to a healthy rhythm. Check with your school for locations of on-campus AEDs.

#### **Who is at risk for sudden cardiac arrest?**

SCA is more likely to occur during exercise or physical activity, so student-athletes are at greater risk. While a heart condition may have no warning signs, studies show that many young people do have symptoms but neglect to tell an adult. This may be because they are embarrassed, they do not want to jeopardize their playing time, they mistakenly think they're out of shape and need to train harder, or they simply ignore the symptoms, assuming they will "just go away." Additionally, some health history factors increase the risk of SCA.

#### **Potential Indicators That SCA May Occur**

- racing or fluttering heart palpitations or irregular heartbeat
- dizziness or lightheadedness
- fainting or seizure, especially during or right after exercise
- fainting repeatedly or with excitement or startle
- chest pain or discomfort with exercise
- excessive, unexpected fatigue during or after exercise
- excessive shortness of breath during exercise

#### **Factors That Increase the Risk of SCA**

- family history of known heart abnormalities or sudden death before age 50
- specific family history of Long QT Syndrome, Brugada Syndrome, Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy, or Arrhythmogenic Right Ventricular Dysplasia (ARVD)

- family members with unexplained fainting, seizures, drowning or near drowning or car accidents
- known structural heart abnormality, repaired or unrepaired
- use of drugs, such as cocaine, inhalants, “recreational” drugs, excessive energy drinks or performance-enhancing supplements

**What should you do if your student-athlete is experiencing any of these symptoms?**

We need to let student-athletes know that if they experience any of the above symptoms it is crucial to alert an adult and get follow-up care as soon as possible with a primary care physician. If the athlete has any of the SCA risk factors, these should also be discussed with a doctor to determine if further testing is needed. Wait for your doctor’s feedback before returning to play, and alert your coach, trainer and school nurse about any unresolved conditions.

**What is CIF doing to help protect student-athletes?**

CIF amended its bylaws to include language that adds SCA training to coach certification and practice and game protocol that empowers coaches to remove from a play a student-athlete who exhibits fainting—the number one warning sign of a potential heart condition. A student-athlete who has been removed from play after displaying signs or symptoms associated with SCA may not return to play until he or she is evaluated and cleared by a licensed health care provider. Parents, guardians and caregivers are urged to dialogue with student-athletes about their heart health and everyone associated with high school sports should be familiar with the cardiac chain of survival so they are prepared in the event of a cardiac emergency.

I have reviewed and understand the symptoms and warning signs of SCA and the new CIF protocol to incorporate SCA prevention strategies into my student’s sports program.

_____	_____	_____
Student-Athlete Signature	Print Student-Athlete’s Name	Date

_____	_____	_____
Parent/Guardian Signature	Print Parent/Guardian’s Name	Date

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For more information about Sudden Cardiac Arrest visit:  
 California Interscholastic Federation. [www.cifstate.org](http://www.cifstate.org)  
 Eric Paredes Save A Life Foundation: [www.epsavealife.org](http://www.epsavealife.org)  
 CardiacWise (20-minute training video). [www.sportsafetyinternational.org](http://www.sportsafetyinternational.org)