

11

Marijuana Use Prevention

High Risk Populations: College Athletes

This document is part of a series designed to support Minnesota's Partnership For Success grantees working on marijuana use prevention on college campuses. More resources from this series can be found in the Toolbox at SUMN.org

What does the population look like?

- The population of student athletes in a given institution ranges widely, depending on factors such as the type of school: for instance, smaller or commuter colleges may have less emphasis on collegiate athletics, while many state schools have large, well-developed athletic programs. Additionally, some schools might mainly support intramural sports, while other institutions provide highly-competitive, NCAA-ranked programs. In any case, athletes have been identified as a population at risk for increased substance use and abuse.

What is the prevalence of marijuana use among student athletes?

- Some studies have found that while student athletes are less likely to smoke marijuana, on average,^{1,2} male hockey and female soccer players are more likely to report marijuana use.¹
- Other studies report that athletes, especially males, are more likely than their non-athlete peers to smoke marijuana.³

What helps explain the relationship between student athletes and marijuana?

- **Sports-related use motives.** Student athletes may have use motives that are specific to athletes, such as celebrations of wins, team bonding, and coping with sports-related stress.⁴
- **Extrinsic motivations.** One study found that athletes who were extrinsically motivated—or driven by external rewards, such as trophies or accolades—used marijuana more frequently.⁵
- **Exaggerated social use norms.** Male athletes with higher perceptions of peer use are more likely to be marijuana users.^{6,7}

11

Athletes and Marijuana Use, *continued*

Use motives that are specific to athletes—such as celebrations of victories—may lead to specific interventions

What are the potential prevention strategies?

Address specific sports-related motives. The influence of sports-related motives may increase even while consumption decreases, and this team influence can be harnessed for prevention. In addition, sports-related motives may be addressed, such as providing alternative methods for celebrating or coping with team losses and stress.⁴

Norming campaigns. Extrinsically-motivated athletes may be more susceptible to peer influence,⁵ and may respond to norming campaigns. Additionally, to increase intrinsic motivation, help them develop feelings of competence and independence.

Team support. Stronger team dynamics, with support from other players and coaches, may lead to less marijuana use. If athletes feel connectedness with teammates and commitment to athletic objectives, they may be less likely to jeopardize team goals by using marijuana with non-athletic peers.⁶

Training for coaches, team leaders, and athletic support staff. Successful programs will capitalize on team bonding, influence of coaches and trainers, and the culture of peer leadership in athletics. These staff could use training in screening and identification of substance use issues, as well as alternative stress-coping strategies. They can also explain the negative physical effects of marijuana use to their athletes, such as muscle fatigue, increased food cravings, and lowered reaction times.

Resources

InShape Prevention Plus Wellness

A brief intervention designed for student athletes to reduce drug use, which incorporates interest in exercise and physical activity.

<http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=196>

Collegiate Athletes and Substance Use: Developing a Prevention Program

Suggestions for development of athlete-specific prevention strategies through modification of existing evidence-based programs.

Citation: Yusko, David A. Collegiate athletes and substance use: Developing a prevention program. ProQuest, 2006.

Project Winning STEPS

The STEPS program for athletes, this screening and brief intervention strategy focuses on alcohol use, but could be adapted for marijuana use.

<http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=292>

11

Athletes and Marijuana Use, *continued*

*Coaches and
team leaders may
play important roles
in motivating
athletes
to avoid marijuana
consumption*

Citations

1. Ford, J. A. (2007). Substance use among college athletes: A comparison based on sport/team affiliation. *Journal of American College Health*, 55(6), 367-373.
2. Wechsler, H., Davenport, A. E., Dowdall, G. W., Grossman, S. J., & Zanakos, S. I. (1997). Binge drinking, tobacco, and illicit drug use and involvement in college athletics: A survey of students at 140 American colleges. *Journal of American College Health*, 45(5), 195-200.
3. Lisha, N. E., & Sussman, S. (2010). Relationship of high school and college sports participation with alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drug use: A review. *Addictive Behaviors*, 35(5), 399-407.
4. Wahesh, E., Milroy, J. J., Lewis, T. F., Orsini, M. M., Wyrick, D. L., Wahesh, E., ... & Wyrick, D. L. (2013). Hazardous drinking by first-year college-athletes: The differential roles of drinking motives, alcohol consequences, and season status. *Journal of Alcohol and Drug Education*, 57(2), 66-84.
5. Rockafellow, B. D., & Saules, K. K. (2006). Substance use by college students: The role of intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation for athletic involvement. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 20(3), 279-287.
6. Grossbard, J., Hummer, J., LaBrie, J., Pederson, E., & Neighbors, C. (2009). Is substance use a team sport? Attraction to team, perceived norms, and alcohol and marijuana use among male and female intercollegiate athletes. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 21(3), 247-261.
7. LaBrie, J. W., Grossbard, J. R., & Hummer, J. F. (2009). Normative misperceptions and marijuana use among male and female college athletes. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 21(S1), S77-S85.
8. Grossman, S. J., & Smiley, E. B. (1999). APPLE: Description and evaluation of a substance abuse education and prevention program for collegiate athletes. *The Journal of Primary Prevention*, 20(1), 51-59.