



## **Pennsylvania Medical and Sports Experts Come Together to Advance Lifesaving Measures for the State's High School Athletes**

***Korey Stringer Institute convenes dozens of medical and sports safety leaders at Heinz Field in Pittsburgh to advance policies proven to prevent sudden death in sports***

**Pittsburgh, PA (October 7, 2021)** – The Korey Stringer Institute (KSI), a national sports safety research and advocacy organization, today as part of its “Team Up for Sports Safety” initiative is convening dozens of Pennsylvania’s foremost experts in medicine and sports to develop a policy roadmap to advance best medical practices proven to reduce sport-related deaths. The convening is being hosted by the Pittsburgh Steelers at Heinz Field and has assembled representatives from the PIAA sports medicine advisory committee, the Pennsylvania State Athletic Directors Association (PSADA), state athletic trainers, sports medicine physicians, legislators, and others to discuss policies to improve high school sport safety in Pennsylvania.

“The Pittsburgh Steelers organization is honored to host the Team Up for Sports Safety event at Heinz Field,” said Pittsburgh Steelers head athletic trainer John Norwig. “Working with such esteemed organizations like the National Athletic Trainers Association, The Pennsylvania Athletic Trainers Society, The Korey Stringer Institute, and the National Football League, we are eager to see Pennsylvania host this event and have an opportunity to play a part in providing a higher standard of health care for High School athletes of the Commonwealth. October 7<sup>th</sup> is a chance for a group of professionals to work with the common goal of providing a safer environment for the youth of Pennsylvania involved in sport.”

“I love the game of football and want to make sure that the next generation of players are learning the sport under the safest conditions possible,” said Pittsburgh Steelers legend and NFL Hall of Famer Jerome Bettis. “I’m proud to see the Steelers and the NFL supporting this important work to protect high school student athletes across Pennsylvania.”

Research has shown that nearly 90 percent of all sudden death in sports is caused by four conditions: sudden cardiac arrest, traumatic head injury, exertional heat stroke, and exertional sickling. It has also been shown that adopting evidence-based safety measures significantly reduces these risks and can save lives. According to KSI’s research, [states only mandate an average of 53% of policies proven to reduce these deaths](#) and Pennsylvania currently mandates 45% of the best practice policies.

Pennsylvania is focused on advancing policies in four key topic areas: Heat acclimatization guidelines, cold water immersion for the treatment of exertional heat stroke, coaching education, and emergency action planning. Policies discussed during the meeting are proven to support athlete safety. For example, heat acclimatization policies require progressive introduction of equipment, contact and total practice duration. Where it has been mandated, heat illness has been reduced by 55% and cold water immersion has saved 100% of heat stroke victims when utilized within 10 minutes of the heat stroke.

“The Pennsylvania Athletic Trainers’ Society is excited to welcome and collaborate with Pennsylvania stakeholders at the TUFSS meeting with a common goal to ensure youth athletes have access to best practices in health, safety and lifesaving strategies in sports,” said Shelly Fetchen DiCesaro, president of the Pennsylvania Athletic Trainers’ Society. “Pennsylvania is a leader in athlete safety and I am inspired to see so many stakeholders from diverse settings coming together, each with their own ideals and goals, to continue working toward excellence and ultimately find common ground to positively influence youth sport safety.”

The meeting is working to produce best practice policy language for each of the four topic areas which will be taken forward by the PIAA Sports Medicine Advisory Committee for consideration by the PIAA.

“The safety and well-being of the secondary school athlete is paramount,” said PATS Chair of the Secondary School Committee, Kiernan Melograna. “I am honored to be a part of the TUFSS event, where we are being provided with expert information on best practices in our field with regards to reducing the incidences of preventable, sports related deaths. The collaboration between all parties in attendance will allow Pennsylvania to continue to excel in the appropriate safety and care that Athletic Trainers are able to provide to the Secondary School athlete.”

Since launching its “Team Up for Sports Safety” (TUFSS) campaign in 2017, Pennsylvania is the 20<sup>th</sup> state that KSI has visited to work with state leaders to propel health and safety policy adoption forward.

“We know that implementation of these important health and safety policies is the first step toward reducing sport-related fatalities,” said Casa. “We are excited that Pennsylvania is taking action to continue to improve its policies and become a leader in minimizing sport-related high school deaths.”

For more information about the Team Up For Sport Safety initiative, please visit [ksi.uconn.edu](http://ksi.uconn.edu).

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