



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

***Up to 90% of sudden deaths among high school student athletes preventable with best practice policies; California only state in nation without athletic trainer regulation***

**Sacramento, CA (February 24, 2022)** – The Korey Stringer Institute (KSI), a national sports safety research and advocacy organization supported by the NFL, today as part of its “Team Up for Sports Safety” initiative is convening dozens of California’s foremost experts in medicine and sports to develop a policy roadmap to advance medical practices proven to reduce sport-related deaths. The meeting, which is being hosted in Sacramento California, brings together representatives from the California Athletic Trainers’ Association (CATA), sports medicine physicians, legislators, high school administrators and others to discuss ways to make high school sports safer in California. California is currently the only state that does not regulate the athletic training profession; the meeting will seek to change that reality.

Research has shown that nearly 90% 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 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 deaths caused by these conditions](#). California currently only mandates 30.8% of the best practice policies.

Securing appropriate licensing for athletic trainers is the foremost priority. California is currently the only state that does not regulate the athletic training profession. Without a credentialing mechanism for these frontline medical professionals serving athletes, under-qualified individuals can adopt the title of athletic trainer, a profession requiring specialized education and considerable training.

“It is shocking that as it stands today, in the state of California any individual can declare themselves to be an athletic trainer and work in the field,” said Douglas Casa, Chief Executive Officer of the Korey Stringer Institute and Professor of Kinesiology at The University of Connecticut. “There is no accreditation apparatus to speak of. The number-one priority of this meeting is to support a change on this front.”

“California has more student-athletes than any other state in the nation. We want to ensure that they have access to the best care available,” said President Ky E. Kugler, EdD, ATC of the California Athletic Trainers’ Association. “First and foremost, it is imperative that the athletic trainers in the state are regulated by way of licensure and nationally credentialed to practice, which is 30+ years overdue. Only then can we ensure that California athletic trainers will provide health care that follows best medical practices, which have been proven to reduce sport-related deaths.”

“We know how important sports are to our youth athletes for both their mental and physical health; COVID has shown us this,” said Dr. Cindy Chang M.D., UCSF Clinical Professor and Past President of the American Medical Society for Sports Medicine. “Let all of us be fully committed to passing a state law licensing athletic

trainers. Qualified and credentialed ATs can not only help reduce risk of injury and illness in our high school student-athletes, but can influence the way our next generation thinks about cooling tubs, Automated External Defibrillators and Emergency Action Plans. Like footballs, soccer cleats, and basketball nets, these need to be considered essential parts of an athletic program — “equipment” that can save lives.”

The meeting will yield best-practice policy language which will be proposed to the California Interscholastic Federation, as well as draft legislation for consideration by the state legislature. The state legislature previously passed athletic training licensure bills in 2010 and 2014 which were vetoed by governors Schwarzenegger and Brown.

Since launching its “Team Up for Sports Safety” (TUFSS) campaign in 2017, California is the 23<sup>rd</sup> state that KSI has visited to work with state leaders to propel health and safety policy adoption forward. KSI’s data show that states which have had TUFSS meetings ended up increasing their best practice policy adoption rate by over double of those that did not, when compared across the same period.

“We know that the implementation of proven health and safety policies will help reduce sport-related fatalities,” said Casa. “We are excited that California 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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