



Texas 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 proven effective in dozens of other states

Frisco, TX (February 23, 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 Texas’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 by The Dallas Cowboys at the AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, brings together representatives from the Texas State Athletic Trainers Association, sports medicine physicians, athletic directors, coaches, and others to discuss ways to make high school sports safer in Texas.

“Texas has the one of the richest cultures of high school athletics in the nation. Given the need to keep young athletes safe, the Cowboys are honored to host this Team Up for Sports Safety event at our facility,” said Cowboys head athletic trainer Jim Maurer. “We look forward to working with the great group of experts from the National Athletic Trainers Association, Texas State Athletic Trainers Association, The Korey Stringer Institute, and the National Football League with the common goal of providing a safer environment for Texas’ youth athletes.”

“Texas high school football has meant a lot to me. I want to make sure that the next generation of players are learning the sport under the safest conditions possible,” said 10-year NFL veteran cornerback and Texas High School Football Hall of Famer Bobby Taylor. “I’m proud to see the Cowboys and the NFL supporting this important work to protect high school student athletes across Texas.”

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.

Texas is focused on advancing policies in five key topic areas: Cold Water Immersion for heat stroke cases; Extreme Weather Modifications for Practices; Emergency Action Plans; Athletic Training Services; and Policies for Strength & Conditioning Sessions. 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% while cold water immersion has saved 100% of heat stroke victims when utilized within 10 minutes of the heat stroke.

The meeting will yield best-practice policy language which will be put forth for consideration by either the Texas University Interscholastic League (UIL) or the state legislature.

“We know that the implementation of proven health and safety policies will help reduce sport-related fatalities,” said Douglas Casa, Chief Executive Officer of the Korey Stringer Institute and Professor of Kinesiology at The University of Connecticut. “We are excited that Texas is taking action to continue to improve its policies and become a leader in minimizing sport-related high school deaths.”

“Texas has always been in the forefront of athletic safety,” said William “Hondo” Schneider, MS, ATC, OPE, and member of the UIL Medical Advisory Committee. “The care and prevention of athletic injuries has evolved over the years and the sports medicine community has worked diligently to ‘keep up’ with its worldwide progress. The University Interscholastic League instituted the Medical Advisory Committee in 2001. Since its inception, many position statements and guidelines have been developed for the health and safety of Texas secondary school athletes, too many to name here. As a licensed athletic trainer in Texas, I am honored to have been named an ambassador for the TUFSS organization. It is my goal for TUFSS to collaborate with the other entities to prevent injuries. This would allow the future of athletics in Texas to continue to grow and be as ‘Big as Texas.’”

“The safety and well-being of the secondary school athletes in our state is paramount,” said Maria Rosanelli Allen, Med, ATC, LAT, NATA District 6 Secondary School Athletic Trainers’ Committee Chair and North Texas Athletic Trainers’ Society President-Elect. “I am honored to be a part of the TUFSS event, where we will discuss the best, data-driven ways to reduce the frequency of preventable sports related death. The collaboration will allow Texas’ beloved culture of high school sports to flourish in the years ahead.”

Since launching its “Team Up for Sports Safety” (TUFSS) campaign in 2017, Texas is the 22nd 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.

For more information about the Team Up For Sport Safety initiative, please visit ksi.uconn.edu.

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