

# Pre-Game Medical Timeout



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# Pre-Game Medical Time-Out

- Before the First Whistle – the one to two-minute meeting that protects every athlete – A simple step that saves lives

# Why Have a Pre-Game Medical Time-Out



# Health and Medical Readiness

- Ensures all stakeholders review and understand EAP
- Improves preparedness for catastrophic events
- **Confirms AED – location, functionality, and access**
- Establishes designated medical roles – to avoid confusion during emergencies
- Reinforces awareness of environmental health risks
- **Addresses the reality that 2 million injuries each year occur in HS athletics**



# Emergency Response Efficiency & Life-Saving Coordination

- Implements pre-determined communication methods (radio, **hand signals**) – reduces response time delays
- Clarifies EMS access routes and transport destination – critical for time-sensitive emergencies
- Aligns ALL personnel (coaches, officials, EMS, Administrators) for coordinated response – directly impacts outcomes
- **Reduces “on-the-fly decision making” – during high-stress incidents, improving clinical outcomes and efficiency**
- Helps prevent False sense of security – that can arise due to low frequency of catastrophic events



# **MOST Critical** when medical professionals are NOT present

- 92% of HS lack mandated sideline medical coverage
- **Identifies who assumes medical leadership in absence of ATC of team physician**
- Ensures Non-Medical Staff (coaches, administrators, officials understand
  - Basic Emergency Rules
  - How to Activate EMS
  - Where lifesaving equipment is located
- Compensates for gap in care
- Provides a minimum standard of care even in under-resourced settings

# Maximizing Effectiveness when medical professionals are present

- Aligns ATCs, Team Physicians, and EMS into a single coordinated response team
- Ensures clarity of scope of practice and decision-making authority
- Improves handoff communication between on-field care and EMS transport
- Confirms equipment readiness (AEDs, airway kits, splints, scoop stretchers) – prior to competition
- Enhances interdisciplinary collaboration – known factor in improving emergency outcomes



# Legal & Medical-Legal Protection

- Demonstrates foreseeability and proactive risk management
  - key legal standard in negligence cases
- Courts recognize liability in failure to:
  - Plan for emergencies
  - Provide adequate medical coverage
  - Ensure personnel know the EAP
- A documented pre-game meeting shows due diligence and standard of care compliance
- **Helps defend against claims of:**
  - **Negligent supervision**
  - **Improper emergency response**
  - **Lack of preparedness**
- Aligns with recommendation from national governing bodies (NFHS, NATA) strengthening defensible practices

# Liability Reduction and Risk Management

- Reduces institutional and personal liability exposure by:
  - Verifying emergency protocols are in place
  - Confirming trained personnel understand responsibilities
- Provides documentation opportunity
- Ensures equipment checks – reducing liability tied to equipment failure
- Demonstrates adherence to best practices and national standards, lowering risk of negligence claims
  - NFL
  - NHL
  - MLS
  - NCAA
  - NFHS

# Communication and Command Structure Clarity

- Establishes a Clear Chain of Command during emergencies
- Identifies Clearly:
  - Who calls 911
  - Who meets EMS
  - Who communicates with parents / spectators
- Prevents communication breakdowns – common contributor to poor outcomes
- Improves coordination between:
  - Home and Visiting Teams
  - Officials
  - Security Personnel



# Environmental and Venue Specific Risk Mitigation

- Addresses Site-Specific Hazards
  - Construction Zones
  - Field Conditions
  - Crowd Flow Issues
- Reviews weather-related risks (heat, lightning) – leading causes of preventable incidents
- Confirms venue-specific EAP details



# Student-Athlete and Spectator Safety Culture

- Reinforces a culture of safety and preparedness across the athletic department
- Provides reassurance for
  - Parents
  - Coaches
  - School Administrators
- Demonstrates the school prioritizes student welfare over competition
- Encourages early recognition of injury / illness – improving outcomes

# Administrative and Operational Benefits for Athletic Directors

- Standardizes procedures across all sports and venues
- Creates consistency regardless of staffing variability
- Helps meet state association and NFHS recommendations
- Provides a framework for training staff and evaluating compliance
- Supports accreditation, audits, and risk management reviews



# Pre-Game Medical Meeting

- You are legally responsible for preparedness – even without medical staff
- Reduces Liability
- Forethought
- Role Clarity
- EAP Awareness

# 4 Biggest Legal Risks

- For Superintendents, Principals, and ADs
  - No Emergency Action Plan
  - Staff unaware of roles
  - No AED access or unclear location
  - Delayed EMS activation

# Minimal Defensible Standard

- Venue-Specific EAP
- AED accessible as quickly as possible
- Staff trained to call 911
- Clear Chain of Command
- Foreseeable = Must Plan For
  - SCA
  - Concussion / Head Injury
  - Heat Stroke (EHI Spectrum)
  - Spine Injury

# Documentation Protects You

- Written EAP for each site / venue
- Staff training records
- Lack of Medical Coverage is NOT a defense – need to compensate with:
  - Planning
  - Role Assignment
  - Clear Procedure
- Consistent pre-game medical meeting + clear EAP + role clarity
- In legal terms: Preparation = Protection

# Pre-Game Medical Time-Out Examples and Scenarios



# What Should Be Covered – **With** Medical Professionals

- Introductions
- Identification of the **Medical Lead**
  - **Home Team Athletic Trainer – 1<sup>st</sup> and Best Choice**
  - IF no home team ATC – then Home Sports Medicine Physician – Next Best Choice
- Location of AEDs and any other Emergency Equipment (AEDs should be as close as possible, visible, and NOT locked up)
- Who calls 911 – EMS Activation Protocol
- Venue Address and EMS access points – Where will the Ambulance enter
- Communication Methods – (Radio, Phone, **Signals**)
- Environmental and Venue-Specific Risks

# Bottom Line – All You Need To Include

- Introductions
- Location and Number of AEDs
- Signal to Call the 911/ Ambulance (Raised Fist Rodeo)
- WHO is calling to activate 911
- Where the Ambulance will enter
- Where to go for inclement weather
- That's It

# Medical Timeout Scenarios – Athletic Trainer Part 1 - Video Dialogue

- **Athletic Trainer** - Hi, my name is and I am the head athletic trainer of (School name) and welcome to...(Location of the Game and Home Team School)
- **Athletic Trainer** – This is (names of any) additional Athletic Training Staff or Medical Staff members at this time
- **Athletic Trainer** - I just want to go over some key Emergency Action Plan items before we play

# Medical Timeout Scenarios – Athletic Trainer Part 2 - Video Dialogue

- **Athletic Trainer** - In the event of inclement weather...(the plan of where to go and what will happen)
- **Athletic Trainer** - We have...(number of AEDs) and they are located...(where the AEDs will be)
- **Athletic Trainer** – I/We will be standing...(location of where they will be during the game)

# Medical Timeout Scenarios – Athletic Trainer Part 3 - Video Dialogue

- **Athletic Trainer** – If there is an injury please wave me onto the field.
- **\*\***(If there is a doctor present as well).
- **Athletic Trainer** – If I need the team doctor to come onto the field, I will signal with a raised fist. If I need to activate EMS and 911, I will do a **raised fist** and make a lassoing motion (**raised fist rodeo**).
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- **Athletic Trainer** – If there is a medical emergency...(who) will call 911 and activate EMS
- **Athletic Trainer** – An ambulance will transport the person to...(specific hospital)
- **Athletic Trainer** – Does anyone have any questions? Let's have a great game!

# What Should Be Covered – **Without** Medical Professionals

- Introductions
- Identification of the **Emergency** Lead
  - **Home Team Athletic Director** if present – 1<sup>st</sup> and Best Choice
  - IF no home AD – then **Site Supervisor** – Next Best Choice
  - IF no home AD and No Site Supervisor – **Home Head Coach**
- **EVERYTHING ELSE IS EXACTLY THE SAME**
- Location of AEDs and any other Emergency Equipment (AEDs should be as close as possible, visible, and NOT locked up)
- Who calls 911 – EMS Activation Protocol
- Venue Address and EMS access points – Where will the Ambulance enter
- Communication Methods – (Radio, Phone, Signals)
- Environmental and Venue-Specific Risks

# Medical Timeout Scenarios – Athletic Director Part 1 - Video Dialogue

- **Athletic Director** - Hi, my name is and I am the Athletic Director of (School name) and welcome to...(Location of the Game and Home Team School)
- **Athletic Director** - I just want to go over some key Emergency Action Plan items before we play
- **Athletic Director** - In the event of inclement weather...(the plan of where to go and what will happen)

# Medical Timeout Scenarios – Athletic Director Part 2 - Video Dialogue

- **Athletic Director** - We have...(number of AEDs) AEDs, and they are located...(where the AEDs will be)
- **Athletic Director** - If there is a medical emergency...(who) will call 911 and activate EMS
- **Athletic Director** - An ambulance will transport the person to...(specific hospital)
- **Athletic Director** – Does anyone have any questions?  
Let's have a great game!

# Medical Timeout Scenarios

## No Medical Staff or AD

- Baseball / Softball
- Coaches – **Home Head Coach**
- Officials
- No athletic trainer
- No athletic director / site director
- No team doctor
- Etc...



# Medical Timeout Scenarios – Head Coach Part 1 - Video Dialogue

- **Head Coach** - Hi, my name is and I am the head coach of (School name) and welcome to...(Location of the Game and Home Team School)
- **Head Coach** - I just want to go over some key Emergency Action Plan items before we play
- **Head Coach** - In the event of inclement weather...(the plan of where to go and what will happen)

# Medical Timeout Scenarios – Head Coach Part 2 - Video Dialogue

- **Head Coach** - We have...(number of AEDs) AEDs and they are located...(where the AEDs will be)
- **Head Coach** - If there is a medical emergency...(who) will call 911 and activate EMS
- **Head Coach** - An ambulance will transport the person to...(specific hospital)
- **Head Coach** - Does anyone have any questions? Let's have a great game!

# Medical Timeout Scenarios

## Neutral Site

- **Neutral Site Director**
- Crucial to review site EAP
- Coaches
- Officials
- Athletic Trainers from both teams
- Etc...



# Medical Timeout Scenarios – Neutral Site Director Part 1 - Video Dialogue

- **Site Director** - Hi, my name is and I am (Their role at the Neutral Site) and welcome to...(Location of the Game and Home Team School). You all should have received our written Emergency Action Plan for this site in advance. If you did not I have written copies for everyone today as well.
- **Site Director** - I just want to go over some key Emergency Action Plan items before we play
- **Site Director** - In the event of inclement weather...(the plan of where to go and what will happen)
- **Site Director** - We have...(number of AEDs) AEDs and they are located...(where the AEDs will be)
- **Site Director** – Who are the Athletic Trainers and coaches for each school?

# Medical Timeout Scenarios –

## Neutral Site Director Part 2 – Video Dialogue

- **Athletic Trainer #1** says – Hi (introduces themselves) and any additional Athletic Training Staff or Medical Staff members at this time. I/We will be standing...(location of where they will be during the game). If there is an injury please wave me onto the field.
- **\*\***(If there are team doctor present as well).
- **Athletic Trainer #1** says – If I need a (or our) team doctor to come onto the field, I will signal with a **raised fist**. If I need to activate EMS and 911, I will do a raised fist and make a lassoing motion (**raised fist rodeo**).
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- **Athletic Trainer #2** says – Hi (introduces themselves) and any additional Athletic Training Staff or Medical Staff members at this time. I/We will be standing...(location of where they will be during the game). If there is an injury please wave me onto the field.
- **\*\***(If there are team doctor present as well).
- **Athletic Trainer #2** says – If I need a (or our) team doctor to come onto the field, I will signal with a raised fist. If I need to activate EMS and 911, I will do a **raised fist** and make a lassoing motion (**raised fist rodeo**).
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- **Site Director** - If there is a medical emergency...(who) will call 911 and activate EMS
- **Site Director** - An ambulance will transport the person to...(specific hospital)
- **Site Director**– Does anyone have any questions? Let's have a great game!

# Bottom Line – All You Need To Include

- Introductions
- Location and Number of AEDs
- Signal to Call the 911/ Ambulance (Raised Fist Rodeo)
- WHO is calling to activate 911
- Where the Ambulance will enter
- Where to go for inclement weather
- That's It

# Bottom Line

- A pre-game medical timeout is not optional best practice – it is a risk management necessity
- Life Safety
- Legal Protection
- Operational Consistency
- Single most important safety intervention you control
- Before the First Whistle – The Two-Minute Meeting Meeting that protects every athlete – A simple step that saves lives

# Resources and References

- MIAA Website Pre-Event Medical Meeting Videos
- MIAA Pre-Event Medical Meeting Scripts for all the different scenarios
- National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) – Pre-Event Medical Meeting
- National Athletic Trainers' Association (2012) Emergency Planning in Athletics Position Statement
- BJSM – Pre-Game Medical Timeout - Sideline Medical Coverage in High School Sports
- Sports Health (2012) - Legal Liability in Athletic Event Coverage (PMC)
- American Heart Association — Guidance on AED access and sudden cardiac arrest response
- Korey Stringer Institute — Emergency action planning in athletics