



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Korey Stringer Institute and PlaySafe Advocate for Athletic Trainers at All High Schools to Support the Health and Safety of Student-Athletes

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Last week, many of us watched the traumatic events of a sudden cardiac arrest unfold live during the Buffalo Bills and Cincinnati Bengals Monday Night Football game. While reports of Damar Hamlin’s current medical status are very encouraging, we continue to send our thoughts and best wishes to Damar, his family, friends, coaches and teammates, and all of the medical personnel who have been involved in his care. We are also thinking of all those individuals who have been personally impacted by a sudden cardiac arrest.

While a sudden cardiac arrest in sports is rare it can happen at any time, in any sport, at any level of competition. Sudden cardiac arrest is the leading cause of death in sports, over 60% of all catastrophic injuries in sports can be attributed to sudden cardiac arrest ([NCCSIR](#)). A [2019 study](#) found that 83% of athletes who sustained a sudden cardiac arrest survived if an athletic trainer was on-site and involved in the resuscitation and 89% survived if an on-site automatic external defibrillator was used in the resuscitation.

There is little doubt that the on-site medical staff and execution of the emergency action plan saved Damar’s life. It is the belief of both the Korey Stringer Institute (KSI) and PlaySafe that all athletes deserve access to high quality and timely healthcare and that that care should not be dependent on income, geography, level of competition, or any other factor. Sadly, Athletic Training Locations and Services ([ATLAS](#)) data reveals that more than one-third of high schools in the United States that have athletics have no access to athletic training services.

“The mission of the Korey Stringer Institute is to provide research, education, advocacy and consultation to maximize performance, optimize safety, and prevent sudden death for the athlete, warfighter, and laborer,” says Douglas Casa, ATC, PhD, KSI CEO and Professor of Kinesiology. “That commitment applies to all athletes, from youth sports through professional and Olympic caliber competitors.”



The Korey Stringer Institute at the University of Connecticut supports the following for the prevention, recognition, and treatment of sudden cardiac arrest in sport: 1) access to on-site athletic trainers, 2) venue specific athletic emergency action plans, 2) early recognition of sudden cardiac arrest, 3) activation of Emergency Medical Services, 4) rapid CPR administration, and 5) AED access within 1-3 minutes of all athletic venues.

“This past week, through the efforts of athletic training colleagues and other medical staff, a young man’s life was saved. Our thoughts and prayers are with Damar Hamlin and all those involved in the management of his care as he continues to recover,” says Jason Powell, ATC, LAT, Director of Athletic Training for PlaySafe. “It is our hope at PlaySafe that awareness of athletic trainers and the importance of having these trained medical professionals at all levels of athletics will continue to evolve.”

PlaySafe, a non-profit provider of athletic training services, strives to provide access to medical services through the development of community partnerships and other sources at large. Athletic training services are often not state funded, so other financial support is essential for schools to provide and maintain these vital resources. PlaySafe’s partnership with the Korey Stringer Institute through the innovATe project has been instrumental in affording athletic training services for high schools in South Carolina. These efforts also support PlaySafe in providing educational opportunities for high schools coaching staff and school administration on health and safety in athletics such as the care and management of sudden cardiac arrest and the development of emergency action plans.

Two ongoing KSI programs are currently working to enhance sports safety policies and increase access to athletic training services in high schools across the country. The Team Up for Sports Safety (TUFSS) project, led by KSI, and sponsored by the National Athletic Trainer’s Association and the NFL Foundation, was established to drive change and adoption of policies proven to reduce catastrophic sport injury at the high school level. The TUFSS project accomplishes this by identifying and bringing together key individuals responsible for improving health and safety policies for high school athletes within a particular state and working together to formalize actionable items for adoption or improvement of health and safety policies.

“We want to be the catalyst to make adopting lifesaving policies easier. We have seen that when stakeholders for high school athlete health and safety come together for a collaborative conversation surrounding lifesaving measures for sport, these critical policies are adopted



faster,” says Rebecca Stearns, PhD, ATC, KSI COO. “Since the inception of TUFSS in 2018, we have visited 30 states. In the first 3 years alone, we saw 38 states adopt policies that made high

school athletes safer, of those that have hosted a TUFSS meeting we see an increase of about 10% in the number of policies to reduce catastrophic sport injury.”

The innovATe project which is funded through the Education fund that was established by the NFL Concussion litigation, is a \$3 million dollar initiative, whose goal is to increase access to medical care provided by an athletic trainer for secondary school athletes in under-resourced communities through the provision of funding, advocacy, education, mentorship, and strategic support to school districts and through partnerships with local medical services.

“All athletes should be able to receive the rapid response and high-quality healthcare that was demonstrated during last week’s events, and the innovATe project helps fund the addition of athletic training services in high schools that have not previously been able to support an athletic training position.,” says Christianne Eason, PhD ATC, KSI President of Sport Safety and director of the innovATe project. “Communities like the Abbeville County School District in South Carolina clearly care about the health and well-being of their student athletes and thanks to funds provided through the innovATe project and support from PlaySafe, this community now has access to the medical care that an athletic trainer is able to provide.”

The Korey Stringer Institute and PlaySafe will continue to advocate for athletic training services and evidence-based sports safety policies that will help keep our young athletes safe and reduce the incidence of catastrophic injuries and illnesses and ensure appropriate care is given in the event of a catastrophic incidence.

The Korey Stringer Institute

The [Korey Stringer Institute](https://ksi.uconn.edu) at the University of Connecticut is a 501.3(c) non-for-profit organization whose mission is to provide research, education, advocacy and consultation to maximize performance, optimize safety and prevent sudden death for the athlete, warfighter and laborer. It was founded to honor the legacy of Korey Stringer, an offensive lineman for the Minnesota Vikings, who passed away from exertional heatstroke in August 2001. The Korey Stringer Institute is partnered with the National Football League, Gatorade, National Athletic Trainers’ Association, Camelbak, Kestrel, Mission, First Line Technology, and Defibtech.

For additional information, please visit <https://ksi.uconn.edu>

PlaySafe



[PlaySafe](https://playsafeusa.org) is a non-profit organization providing athletic trainers to high schools in South Carolina and Georgia. As an organization, PlaySafe educates, promotes, supports, and fosters healthy lifestyles, wellness, and safe athletic participation.

For additional information, please visit <https://playsafeusa.org>

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