# A Sudden Cardiac Arrest Information Sheet for Athletes and Parents/Guardians

The State of California passed the Eric Paredes Sudden Cardiac Arrest Prevention Act in 2016 to protect K-12 students participating in school-sponsored athletic activities. New policy adds sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) training to coach certification, and new protocol that empowers coaches to remove from play a student-athlete who exhibits fainting—the number one warning sign of a potential heart condition, and potentially for other conditions if they are believed to be cardiac related. A student-athlete who has been removed from play after displaying signs or symptoms associated with SCA may not return to play until he or she is evaluated and cleared by a licensed health care provider. Parents, guardians, caregivers and adults involved in athletic activities are urged to dialogue with student-athletes about potential warning signs and risk factors and be familiar with the cardiac chain of survival so they are prepared in the event of a cardiac emergency.

**What is sudden cardiac arrest?**
Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is when the heart stops beating, suddenly and unexpectedly. When this happens blood stops flowing to the brain and other vital organs. SCA is NOT a heart attack. A heart attack is caused by a blockage that stops the flow of blood to the heart. SCA is a malfunction in the heart's electrical system, causing the victim to collapse. The malfunction is caused by a congenital or genetic defect in the heart's structure.

**How common is sudden cardiac arrest in the United States?**
As the leading cause of death in the U.S., there are more than 350,000 cardiac arrests outside hospitals annually, with nine out of 10 resulting in death. Thousands of sudden cardiac arrests occur among youth each year, as it is the #1 killer of student athletes during exercise and the leading cause of death on school campuses.

**Who is at risk for sudden cardiac arrest?**
SCA is more likely to occur during exercise or physical activity, so student-athletes are at greater risk. While a heart condition may have no warning signs, studies show that many young people do have symptoms but neglect to tell an adult. This may be because they are embarrassed, they do not want to jeopardize their playing time, they mistakenly think they're out of shape and need to train harder, or they simply ignore the symptoms, assuming they will "just go away." Additionally, some health history factors increase the risk of SCA.

**What should you do if your student-athlete is experiencing any of these symptoms?**
We need to let student-athletes know that if they experience any SCA-related symptoms it is crucial to alert an adult and get follow-up care as soon as possible with a primary care physician. Likewise, parents can be proactive in reviewing the symptoms directly with their student athlete versus just assuming they're OK if they haven't said otherwise. If the athlete has any of the SCA risk factors based on family history, these should also be discussed with a doctor to determine if further testing is needed. Wait for your doctor's feedback before returning to play, and alert your coach, trainer and school nurse about any diagnosed conditions.

## Warning Signs That SCA May Occur

• Fainting or seizure, especially during or right after exercise
• Fainting repeatedly or with excitement or startle
(Fainting is the #1 sign of a potential heart condition)
• Excessive shortness of breath during exercise
• Racing or fluttering heart palpitations or irregular heartbeat
• Repeated dizziness or lightheadedness
• Chest pain or discomfort with exercise
• Excessive, unexpected fatigue during or after exercise

## Family History Factors That Increase the Risk of SCA

• Family history of known heart abnormalities or sudden death before age 50
• Specific family history of Long QT Syndrome, Brugada Syndrome, Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy, or Arrhythmogenic Right Ventricular Dysplasia (ARVD)
• Family members with unexplained fainting, seizures, drowning or near drowning or car accidents
• Known structural heart abnormality, repaired or unrepaired
• Use of drugs, such as cocaine, inhalants, "recreational" drugs, excessive energy drinks, diet pills or performance-enhancing supplements

### What can you do to protect young hearts?

- Talk with your son or daughter about potential warning signs noted above, and check your family tree for the above risk factors. Discuss any warning signs and risk factors with your primary care physician immediately.

I have reviewed and understand the symptoms and warning signs of SCA and the new protocol to incorporate SCA prevention strategies into my/my student's sports program or activity.

| STUDENT-ATHLETE SIGNATURE | PRINT STUDENT-ATHLETE'S NAME | DATE |
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| PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE | PRINT PARENT/GUARDIAN'S NAME | DATE |
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