



Charles County

Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

Youth Basketball League Guidelines

I. THE LEAGUE:

- A. **Mission:** To enhance the quality of life of our residents and visitors by providing well rounded recreational and competitive sport programs focusing on building a sense of community and improving the overall quality of life for current and future generations.
- B. **Philosophy:** Charles County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism community-based recreational youth leagues are, first and foremost, intended to provide a positive social experience for young boys and girls with an emphasis placed on good sportsmanship, fun, and exercise. The youth basketball league was formed to provide a level playing field to refine skills and further the advancement of all players. The recreation division has adopted the standards of the National Youth Sports Coaches Association (NYSCA). These standards were developed for all volunteers to follow in developing and administering youth sports for youth.
- C. **Administration:** All leagues will operate under the jurisdiction of the Charles County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism (all guidelines are subject to review and changes may be made at the discretion of the League Coordinator). Items not specifically listed in these guidelines will be decided upon by the league coordinator, and any questions or discrepancies should be brought to the League Coordinator's attention for review. The league coordinator for the youth basketball league is Travon Royall, Sports Coordinator. Mr. Royall can be reached at 301-932-3470 ext. 5150 or Royallt@CharlesCountyMD.gov.

D. League Format:

- A. The program is designed for boys and girls to participate in the following age divisions.
 - a. Boys Division: 3rd Grade, 4th Grade, 5th Grade, 6th Grade, 7th Grade, 8th Grade, and 9th – 12th Grades
 - b. Girls Division: 3rd – 5th Grade, 6th – 8th Grade, 9th – 12th Grades
- B. Teams will play a minimum (8) eight game schedule.
- C. League standings will be kept. Standings will be updated weekly and will be on our website, www.CharlesCountyParks.com.
- D. All leagues are countywide except the 4th and 5th Grade Boys.
- E. All league participants will receive a certificate.
- F. Playoff format TBD.

II. VOLUNTEER COACHES:

- A. Prior to the season, all coaches (head coaches and assistant coaches) MUST:

1. Submit a coaching application with contact information.
2. Submit to a mandatory **Criminal Background Investigation.**
3. Attend and pass a mandatory NYSCA Certification.
4. Sign and adhere to the Recreation Division Coaches Code of Conduct. Abide by and adhere to the League Guidelines.

B. The coach will be the team representative and will be responsible for the following:

1. Be the liaison between the League Coordinator/Community Center staff and team members.
2. Attend all coaches/managers' meetings.
3. Wear issued coaches shirts. See Equipment Section.
4. The conduct of team players, assistant coach, players' parents and team spectators.
5. Head coach is only allowed **one (1)** assistant coach per team.
6. Inform and distribute to team members and parents all information pertaining to the league (rules, regulations, schedule, make-up dates, parents and players' code of conduct, etc.).
7. Coaches are responsible for ensuring that roster information including assistant coach's name and current phone number is correct at all times.
8. Reinforce the recreation philosophy to all players.
9. Keep team bench and surrounding area free of trash.
10. Drugs should never be administered to players, other coaches or spectators. Any coach or player in violation of this rule will be suspended from coaching and/or participation in Recreation division recreation-sponsored programs.
11. Adhere to the Charles County Public School no smoking policy while on school grounds.
12. Not allow food or drinks or personal basketballs to be permitted in the gymnasium.

III. TEAM MEMBERSHIP:

- A. All players must be registered.
- B. **All teams will consist of a minimum of eight (8) players and a maximum of 10 players.** (Total registration will dictate the number of players on each team).
- C. Players must be between the ages of **8 and 18 years old (must still be in High School).** **Participants that graduate early and are under the age of 18 may participate.** Age and Grade determined as of **September 1, 2024.**
- D. Children can only be rostered on one team.

E. Players must play within the appropriate age division: 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th – 12th Grades for Boys and 3rd – 5th Grade and 6th – 8th Grade for Girls. Children may be allowed to play up one grade level but cannot play down a grade. This must be declared before the start of that team's second practice.

F. Players will be placed on a roster by the League Coordinator, according to designated boundaries, age, experience, and height.

G. Out of County Players

1. Non-residents of Charles County are welcome to participate, however, in the circumstances where a division has reached a full capacity of teams, rosters with Charles County residents will be given priority.

IV. SPORTSMANSHIP:

A. All players, coaches and spectators will be required to maintain good sportsmanship, always.

B. Charles County DRPT is implementing “Silent 1st Quarter” to encourage positive cheering. During this time, spectators will be asked to remain silent and to only clap and cheer positively during this quarter.

C. At the conclusion of each game, one participant on each team will receive the Good S.P.O.R.T.S Sportsmanship Award. This award recognizes participants who best follow the Good S.P.O.R.T.S. motto by exemplifying the spirit of the game through their positive attitude, demeanor, and treatment of fellow competitors, teammates, coaches, and officials and being Good S.P.O.R.T.S!

D. Good S.P.O.R.T.S stands for:

- a. Sportsmanship
- b. Positive Attitude
- c. Obey the Rules
- d. Respect
- e. Team Work
- f. Strive for Success

E. The award will only be granted to a player if that one player meets the above criteria. The award can be determined by the opposing coach.

V. EJECTIONS AND SUSPENSIONS:

A. Consequences for suspensions/ejections will be decided by the Recreation, Parks, and Tourism office based upon a 3 Tier system. If games are postponed or rescheduled, suspensions are indefinite until games are played.

1. Tier One: Minimum 1 game Suspension

a) A tier one offense may be issued to any player, parent, coach, or spectator who:

1. Is ejected from a game, asked to leave a game or practice site, or is reported to be involved in any form of harassment, obscene gestures or language, or any other unsportsmanlike behavior by an official or Department of Recreation, Parks and

Tourism staff member The result of these actions will result in a 1 game suspension, effective immediately, starting with your teams next scheduled game.

- b) After review of the incident by the League Director, additional games may be added to the suspensions
 - c) Any further ejections may result in suspension from the league.

2. **Tier Two: Suspension for remainder of season**

- a) Players, parents, coaches, or spectators may be suspended from the league and all Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism programs for the remainder of the season.
- b) A tier two offense may be issued, at the discretion of the League Director to any player, coach, or spectator based on the following criteria, which includes but is not limited to:
 - 1. Committing multiple tier one offenses within the same season.
 - 2. Strike, shove, bump, trip, or threaten an official, player, coach, spectator, Recreation, Parks, and Tourism staff member or league official during or after a game, on Charles County Community Center, Public School, or Park property.

3. **Tier Three: 2 Year Suspension**

- a) Anyone involved in a tier 3 offense may be suspended from the league and all Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism programs for a minimum of two years.
- b) A tier three offense may be issued, with discretion from the League Director, to any player, parent, coach, or spectator based on the following criteria, which includes but is not limited to:
 - 1. Committing multiple tier one or tier two offenses within a year of previous offenses.
 - 2. Is involved in a severe incident that displays excessive, relentless, or malicious disobedience of our mission, including but not limited to; harassment, fighting, or conduct with intent to harm an official, player, coach, spectator, Recreation, Parks, and Tourism staff member or league official during or after a game, on Charles County Community Center, Public School, or Park Property.

VI. GAME RULES:

Official National Federation of State High Schools (NFHS) will govern league play with the following exceptions:

1. The home team will be the team on the right side of the schedule. (Away vs. Home)
2. Teams will enter the double bonus after 5 team fouls per quarter. The Foul count will reset at the end of each quarter.
3. **TIME:** Games will consist of four quarters comprised of:

- i. 8-minute running quarters. **Clock will stop on all free throw attempts.**
 - During the last two (2) minutes of each game the clock will stop on all dead ball situations. The only exception is if a team is ahead by twenty (20) points the clock will continue to run.
 - ii. 1 minute between quarters
 - iii. 3 minute half-time
 - iv. (2) 3-minute overtime period(s)
4. **TIMEOUTS:** Coaches may call timeouts. During a game, each team is allowed:
 - i. Four (4) full timeouts
 - ii. In case of overtime, each team will receive an extra time out. Time outs left from regulation will carry over.
5. **SUBSTITUTIONS:** Substitutions may only be made at the four (4) minute mark or change of quarter. Once ALL players have received their mandatory play time, coaches may substitute at will on dead balls. Please see Section regarding Mandatory Play Rules.
6. **DELAY OF GAME:** There will be no delay of the game if a team does not have enough players to start the game (players must be dressed and, on the court,). The clock will start as the game was scheduled. Any team that doesn't have enough players at the start of the game will be penalized in the following manner:
 - The opposing team will receive two (2) points at the start of the official game and two (2) points for every minute that has elapsed off the game clock until the team being penalized has fielded a complete team (Five (5) Players).
 - If enough players arrive within the first quarter of the game, the game will be played.
 - The time elapsed will not be added back to the official game clock.
 - If the team does not have five (5) players by the time the first quarter has elapsed, the game will be declared a forfeit.
7. **There is no dunking or hanging on the rims allowed at any Elementary or Middle school. A technical foul along with a team foul will be issued.**
8. During a free throw, players may enter the lane once the ball is released from the shooters hand. The shooter must wait until the ball touches the rim or backboard before entering the lane.
 - i. **Exception: The shooter may step on or over the free throw line in the Boys 3rd Grade, 4th Grade and 5th Grade and Girls 3rd – 5th grade age groups but are not permitted to chase after the rebound to gain an unfair advantage.**
 - ii. 3rd Grade Boys and 3rd – 5th Grade Girls may shoot free throws from a modified foul line, three (3) feet in front of the foul line.
9. The three (3) second violation will apply to the regulation foul line for all age divisions.
10. **FULL COURT PRESS:** A defensive strategy known as *full court press* is allowed for the

6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th – 12th Grade Boys, and the 6th – 8th Grade and 9th – 12th grade girls division, with the following exceptions:

- i. No Press Rule: The team that is leading cannot full court press if:
 - If a team is leading by 15 points
 - Once the basketball is in possession of the rebounding team, the team leading (if they are on defense) must fall back behind the half court line extended.
 - First violation of the No Press rule will result in a team warning. If it is determined that a team is trying to gain an advantage over an opponent a technical foul will be assessed to the offending team for each violation thereafter. If four (4) technical fouls are picked up by the same team, the game will be determined to be over. (This rule will be enforced under the judgment of the official and/or Site Attendant).
- i. **FULL COURT PRESSING WILL NOT BE ALLOWED IN THE 3rd, 4th or 3rd – 5th Grade Girls divisions. Once the basketball is in possession of the rebounding team, the defensive team must fall back behind the press line at the basket they are defending. Once the offensive team crosses the press line, the press rule is off.**
 - 4th – 5th Grade Southwest and 5th Grade North will not be allowed to press at the start of the season. On a date to be determined players will be allowed to press in these age groups only.**
 - Game play will be monitored and this rule may be removed.**
- ii. **Teams on offense will have 5 seconds to cross the press line once they cross half court. If players do not cross the press line the press rule is off.**
- iii. It is the coach's responsibility to instruct their players where the press line starts. Since the league uses so many different facilities, the press line in most cases will be different. There is a clearly defined line in each gymnasium. Please ask the Center Coordinator or the Official if you are unsure of where the press line starts.
- iv. If there is not a clearly define press line, the top of the key/three-point line will be used as the press line.

11. **Mercy Rule:** Please remember that the Charles County Department of Recreation, Parks & Tourism community-based recreational youth leagues are, first and foremost, intended to provide a positive social experience for young boys and girls with an emphasis placed on good sportsmanship, fun, and exercise.

- i. **In the event that a team is leading by 25 points or more the scorekeeper will no longer continue to keep the game score. The official score book located at the scorer's table will keep the official score. If the losing team brings the point differential to fewer than 25 points, the score will once again be kept on the score board.**
12. Disrespectfully addressing, baiting, or taunting an opponent will not be tolerated. Penalty will result in two (2) free throws plus possession of the basketball. A technical foul is charged to the offender.

13. **Hand Checking:** It is illegal to use hands on an opponent that in any way inhibits the freedom of movement of an opponent or acts as an aid to stop a player in starting or stopping.
14. Only one coach is allowed to stand during the game.
15. If a coach receives a technical foul, then both coaches must remain seated on the bench for the remainder of the game.
16. Teams waiting to play the next game must be seated in the stands/designated area until their game begins.
17. **No shooting at the baskets is permitted during timeout or intermission.** Only the teams warming up for that game should be shooting at the baskets or be on the playing floor.
18. When the game is over, coaches will line up teams to shake hands and show sportsmanship.
19. Food, Gum, Drinks will not be allowed in the gymnasiums.

VII. MANDATORY PLAY RULE:

- A. All youth leagues will have an established minimum play rule per game for all children regardless of ability.
- B. Purpose of rule: The Purpose of the Mandatory Play Rule is to ensure that every participant is given the opportunity to play and to develop skills during an organized basketball game regardless of ability.
- C. Implementation of the rule: Coaches may reserve the right to restrict play of individuals who require special health precautions. **(This must immediately be brought to the attention of the Site Attendant for review prior to any scheduled game or upon discovery).** It is also the coach's responsibility to notify the opposing team's coach of any health problems. If by chance a situation cannot be clarified by the Site Attendant, a written protest may be made. At this time the official will be notified of the protest and the official scorer will log this into the score book. If the coach has not addressed the Site Attendant/or official for clarification, the League Coordinator will not accept a protest on the matter.
- D. **Any player who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion, or balance problems) shall be immediately removed from the game and shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health care professional. This is at the discretion of the staff on duty and referees.**
- E. If a player is removed from the game due to injury or blood, the coach and site attendant will use their judgment and discretion on the completion of any remaining mandatory play.
- F. Coaches are reminded that this league is dedicated to instructing youth in becoming better basketball players. **Abuse or violating the Mandatory Play Rule could result in suspension or expulsion of the coach.**
- G. Each player must play **at least eight (8) minutes each half.** This can be done by either playing four (4) minutes each quarter or full eight (8) minutes during the quarter. Until the mandatory play requirement is completed, each player must complete any four minute segment of time which player begins.
 1. Substitutions will only be allowed at the four (4) minute mark (or as close to the four (4) minute mark as possible), or at the end of the quarter. Exceptions to this will be either an injury or a player fouling out. Unless the officials deems it necessary. **The clock will not stop in order to sub in players at the 4 minute mark.**

2. Once **EVERY** member of the team has fulfilled the mandatory playing time (16 minutes) then a coach may substitute at will on dead balls.
3. To further ensure playing time is distributed equally, **no player may play more than three (3) quarters of the game unless the team has seven (7) or fewer players.**
4. Players that arrive after the game has started, but before the second quarter begins, will still be required to play two (2) full quarters. Players arriving after the start of the second quarter will not be subject to the Mandatory Play Rule. These players are still required to play at least one (1) quarter (8 minutes).

H. This rule will be closely monitored. However, it is the coach's responsibility to comply with this rule (i.e., checking with the Site Attendant at half-time or between quarters to see which players have not fulfilled the mandatory play requirement).

I. The following procedures will be used if the rule has been violated:

1. Scorekeeper will notify the Site Coordinator with the following information: age division, team name, coach's name(s), players' names and players' numbers.
2. The Site Coordinator will review the incident and make a decision on the situation.

J. The Mandatory Play Rule may be waived if any of the following occurs:

1. A player who has not fulfilled the requirements of the playing rule is injured and unable to return to the game.
2. An injured player who re-enters the game in order to fulfill the requirements but fails to do so due to the lack of time remaining (applicable only in the fourth quarter).
3. A player who has not fulfilled the conditions of the playing rule fouls out of the game.

K. **If a child is not attending practices but showing up only for the games, the mandatory play rule may be waived.** The coach must call the League Coordinator directly to discuss this situation. After consultation, the League Coordinator may make a decision to waive the mandatory play rule.

VIII. EQUIPMENT:

A. The following will be the official balls and uniforms provided by the Department of Recreation, Parks & Tourism:

1. The 3rd, 4th and 5th Grade Boys and the 3rd – 5th, 6th – 8th, and 9th – 12th Grade Girl's division will use an intermediate size ball (28.5).
2. The 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th – 12th Grade Boys will use an official size ball (29.5).

B. All players must wear numbered jerseys. Shorts, sweatpants and sneakers are allowed. Boots or hard soled shoes of any kind are not allowed. Team colors are predetermined by the League Coordinator.

C. **The only uniform provided is a jersey**, which must be tucked in, and must be worn for each scheduled game. Not having a game shirt may result in a player not being able to participate in the game. **No alteration of the league T-shirt is permitted. If a jersey is determined to be altered, the player will not be permitted to play until a new shirt is ordered, paid for, and received by the participant.**

D. Each coach will be required to wear an issued coaches shirts. Assistant coaches that are not wearing one

will not be allowed on the sidelines. If a head coach is not wearing one their team will start the game with a technical foul and must remain seated for the remainder of the game. If both head coaches do not have a shirt a double technical foul will be issued and both head coaches must sit the entire game. Both teams will shoot free throws and the game will begin with a jump ball.

- E. If in the opinion of the Official, a color conflict of uniforms exists, the home team will wear scrimmage vests during the game, provided by the facility.
- F. Player blood rule in effect. A player whom is bleeding or has blood on their uniform must leave the court for immediate medical attention. Bleeding must be stopped, the wound dressed, and no fresh blood is to be on the uniform before the player is allowed to return.
 - a. Jewelry and earrings are prohibited.
 - b. Religious and medical-alert medals are not considered jewelry. A religious medal shall be taped and worn under the uniform. A medical-alert medal shall be taped and may be visible.
 - c. Due to safety concerns, Charles County Recreation, Parks, & Tourism does not recommend wearing beads in the hair, however, if beads are to be worn, at the discretion of the referee, Department of Recreation, Parks, & Tourism staff, or league representative they must be securely fastened close to the head and covered with a soft covering so as to not increase the risk to athletes, teammates or opponents.
 - d. Sweat bands for wrist and head are allowed if worn appropriately.
 - e. Items worn for religious reasons must be brought to the attention of the Site Attendant.
 - f. No metal belt buckles allowed.
 - g. Eyeglasses should be secured with a strap.
 - h. Casts of any kind, even if padded, are not allowed.
 - i. Food, Gum, Drinks will not be allowed in the gymnasiums.
 - j. **No bags or extra clothing items permitted in the bench area. All bags must remain in the stands and or with parent/guardian.**

IX. LEAGUE REGULATIONS

- A. Protests: Rule interpretations and player eligibility are the only grounds for protest and must be protested at the time of the incident, and before play resumes. Official judgment calls are not grounds for any protest! The coach must immediately notify the Site Attendant of their intent to protest. The protest will be logged in the score book.
- B. If by chance a situation cannot be clarified by the Site Attendant, a written protest may be made to the League Coordinator. If the coach has not addressed with the site attendant for an on the spot clarification, the league coordinator will not accept a protest on the matter.
- C. Formal protests must be submitted in writing to the League Coordinator within two (2) business days of the incident. **The cost of the protest is \$100.00.** If it is determined that the protest is valid and upheld than the \$100.00 will be returned.

- D. League Coordinator has final say in all league decisions.
- E. The league coordinator for the indoor youth program is Travon Royall, Sports Coordinator. Mr. Royall can be reached at 301-932-3470 ext. 5150 or royallt@CharlesCountyMD.gov.
- F. No verbal complaints concerning umpires, other teams, etc., will be addressed --- all complaints must be made in writing and submitted to the League Director.
- G. League Standings

- a. League standings will be kept. Standings will be updated weekly and will be on our website, www.CharlesCountyParks.com.

H. Tie Break Procedures:

- a. The tie break procedures will only be used if teams are tied in regular season standings, and will be as follows:
 - i. Win/Loss record in head-to-head competition.
 - ii. Points allowed in head-to-head competition.
 - iii. Points allowed against the entire league.
 - iv. If necessary, a coin flip will take place.

* *If three or more teams are tied, prior to #2 Win/Loss record in head-to-head competition between all tied teams will be used. If teams are still tied, total points allowed in head-to-head competition between all tied teams will be used prior to number 2.

XI. CANCELLATION PROCEDURES

- A. All coaches will be notified of any cancellations via email. Notices will also be posted on our website.
- B. Coaches are responsible for notifying parents of any cancellations.

CONCUSSION FACT SHEET

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is an injury that changes how the cells in the brain normally work. A concussion is caused by a blow to the head or body that causes the brain to move rapidly inside the skull. Even a “ding”, “getting your bell rung”, or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious.

Concussions can also result from a fall or from players colliding with each other or with obstacles, such as a goalpost, even if they do not directly hit their head.

The potential for concussions is the greatest in athletic environments where collisions are common. Concussions can occur, however, in any organized or unorganized sport or recreational activity. As many as 3.8 million sports and recreation-related concussions occur in the United States each year.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A CONCUSSION?

If your child has experienced a bump or blow to the head during a game or practice, look for any of the following signs and symptoms of a concussion:

Signs Observed by Parents or Guardians

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets an instruction
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows behavior or personality changes
- Cannot recall events prior to hit or fall
- Cannot recall events after hit or fall

Symptoms Reported by Athlete

- Headache or “pressure” in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Does not “feel right”

HOW CAN YOU HELP YOUR CHILD PREVENT A CONCUSSION?

Every sport is different, but there are steps your children can take to protect themselves from concussion

- Ensure that they follow their coach’s rules for safety and the rules of the sport
- Encourage them to practice good sportsmanship at all times
- Make sure they wear the right protective equipment for their activity. Protective equipment should fit properly, be well maintained, and be worn consistently and correctly
- Learn the signs and symptoms of concussion.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU THINK YOUR CHILD HAS A CONCUSSION?

- **Seek medical attention right away**
 - A health care professional will be able to decide how serious the concussion is and when it is safe for your child to return to sports
- **Keep your child out of play**
 - Concussions take time to heal. Don’t let your child return to play until a health car professional says it’s ok. Children who return to play too soon – while the brain is still healing – risk a greater chance of having a second concussion. Second or later concussions can be very serious. They can cause permanent brain damage, affecting your child for a lifetime.
- **Tell your child’s coach about any recent concussion**

- Coaches should know if your child had a recent concussion in ANY sport. Your child's coach may not know about a concussion your child received in another sport or activity unless you tell the coach.

Remember, you can't always see a concussion and some athletes may not experience and/or report symptoms until hours or days after the injury. It's better to miss one game than the whole season.

For more detailed information on concussion and traumatic brain injury, visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/injury>

Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) Information for Parents and Student Athletes

Definition: Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) is a potentially fatal condition in which the heart suddenly and unexpectedly stops beating. When this happens, blood stops flowing to the brain and other vital organs. SCA in student athletes is rare; the chance of SCA occurring to any individual student athlete is about one in 100,000. However, student athletes' risk of SCA is nearly four times that of non-athletes due to the increased demands on the heart during exercise.

Causes: SCA is caused by several structural and electrical diseases of the heart. These conditions predispose an individual to have an abnormal rhythm that can be fatal if not treated within a few minutes. Most conditions responsible for SCA in children are inherited, which means the tendency to have these conditions is passed from parents to children through the genes. Other possible causes of SCA are a sudden blunt non-penetrating blow to the chest and the use of recreational or performance-enhancing drugs and/or energy drinks.

Warning Signs of SCA

- SCA strikes immediately.
- SCA should be suspected in any athlete who has collapsed and is unresponsive.
- No response to tapping on shoulders
- Does nothing when asked if he/she is OK
- No pulse

Emergency Response to SCA

- Act immediately; time is most critical to increase survival rates.
- Recognize SCA.
- Call 911 immediately and activate EMS.
- Administer CPR.
- Use Automatic External Defibrillator (AED).

Warning signs of potential heart issues: The following need to be further evaluated by your primary care provider.

- Family history of heart disease/cardiac arrest
- Fainting, a seizure, or convulsions during physical activity
- Fainting or a seizure from emotional excitement, emotional distress, or being startled
- Dizziness or lightheadedness, especially during exertion
- Exercise-induced chest pain
- Palpitations: awareness of the heart beating, especially if associated with other symptoms such as dizziness

- Extreme tiredness or shortness of breath associated with exercise
- History of high blood pressure

Risk of Inaction: Ignoring such symptoms and continuing to play could be catastrophic and result in sudden cardiac death. Taking these warning symptoms seriously and seeking timely appropriate medical care can prevent serious and possibly fatal consequences.

Information used in this document was obtained from the American Heart Association (www.heart.org), Parent Heart Watch (www.parentheartwatch.org), and the Sudden Cardiac Arrest Foundation (www.sca-aware.org). Visit these sites for more information.

Frequently Asked Questions about Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA)

What are the most common causes of Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) in a student athlete?

SCA is caused by several **structural** and **electrical** diseases of the heart. These conditions predispose an individual to have an abnormal rhythm that can be fatal if not treated within a few minutes. Most conditions responsible for SCA in children are **inherited**, which means the tendency to have these conditions is passed from parents to children through the genes. Some of these conditions are listed below.

1. *Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM)*: HCM involves an abnormal thickening of the heart muscle and it is the most common cause of SCA in an athlete.
2. Coronary artery anomalies: The second most common cause is congenital (present at birth) abnormalities of coronary arteries, the blood vessels that supply blood to the heart.
3. Other possible causes of SCA are:
 - a. *Myocarditis*: an acute inflammation of the heart muscle (usually due to a virus).
 - b. Disorders of heart electrical activity such as:
 - c. *Long QT syndrome*.
 - d. *Wolff-Parkinson-White (WPW) syndrome*.
 - e. *Catecholaminergic Polymorphic Ventricular Tachycardia (CPVT)*.
 - f. *Marfan syndrome*: a condition that affects heart valves, walls of major arteries, eyes, and the skeleton.
 - g. Congenital aortic valve abnormalities.
 - h. *Commotio Cordis*: concussion of the heart from **sudden blunt non-penetrating blow** to the chest
 - i. Use of recreational, **performance-enhancing** drugs, and **energy drinks** can also bring on SCA.

How can we minimize the risk of SCA and improve outcomes?

The risk of SCA in student athletes can be minimized by providing appropriate prevention, recognition, and treatment strategies. One important strategy is the requirement for a yearly pre-participation screening evaluation, often called a sports physical, performed by the athlete's medical provider. Since the majority of these conditions are inherited, **be aware of your family history**, especially if any close family member:

1. had sudden unexplained and unexpected death before the age of 50.
2. was diagnosed with any of the heart conditions listed above.
3. died suddenly /unexpectedly during physical activity, during a seizure, from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) or from drowning.

Take seriously the warning signs and symptoms of SCA

Athletes should notify their parents, coaches, or school nurses if they experience any of these warning signs or symptoms. Schools in Maryland have AED policies and emergency preparedness plans to address SCA and other emergencies in schools. Be aware of your school's various preventive measures.

If a cardiovascular disorder is suspected or diagnosed based on the comprehensive pre-participation screening evaluation, a referral to a child heart specialist or pediatric cardiologist is crucial. Such athletes will be excluded from sports pending further evaluation and clearance by their medical providers.