



Charles County

Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

Youth Indoor Soccer Guidelines

I. THE LEAGUE:

- A. **Mission:** To enhance the quality of life of our residents and visitors by providing well rounded recreational and competitive sports 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 soccer 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 Coordinators attention for review. The league coordinator for the indoor youth program is Rachel Halmon, Sports Coordinator. Ms. Halmon can be reached at 240-349-3049 or halmonr@CharlesCountyMD.Gov.

D. League Format:

- A. The program is designed for boys and girls to participate in the following divisions:
- Co-Ed Division ages 5-6 (6U), 7-8 (8U), 9-10 (10U), 11-12 (12U), 13-14 (14U), 15-18 (18U - Must still be in High School)
- B. Teams will play a minimal (8) eight game schedule.
- C. All divisions may play games Thursdays, Fridays, and/or Saturdays. 12U, 14U and 18U divisions will play on Monday nights. A possibility of make ups may be necessary if inclement weather dictates.
- D. League standings will be kept. Standings will be updated weekly and will be on our website, www.CharlesCountyParks.com.
- E. Depending on the number of registrations, some age levels will become county-wide leagues.
- F. All league participants will receive a participation certificate.
- G. Playoff Format TBD

II. VOLUNTEER COACHES:

- A. Prior to the season, all coaches (head coaches and assistant coaches) MUST:
- Submit a coaching application with contact information.

2. Submit to a mandatory **Criminal Background Investigation.**
3. 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 always correct.
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 any Department of Recreation, Parks & Tourism 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 soccer balls 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 12 players. (Total registration will dictate the number of players on each team).
- C. Players must be between the ages of 5 and 18 years old. Age determined as of September 1.
- D. Children can only be rostered on one team.
- E. Players must play within the appropriate age division: 5-6, 7-8, 9-10, 11-12, 13-14 and 15-18. Children may be allowed to play up one age level but cannot play down in age. 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
 - Non-residents of Charles County are welcome to participate, however, in the circumstance where divisions have reached a full capacity of teams, rosters with Charles County residents will be given priority.

IV. EJECTIONS/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.

V. GAME RULES:

Games will be played in accordance with the current Federation of International Futbol Association (FIFA) Rules with the following exceptions:

- A. The home team will kick off first. The home team will be the team on the right side of the schedule. (Away vs. Home)

- B. **TIME:** Games will consist of two halves comprised of:
1. 12-minute running halves – 6U age division (24 minutes total)
 2. 16-minute running halves – 8U – 18U age divisions (32 minutes total)
 3. 3-minute halftimes
 4. No Overtime periods. If the game is tied at the end of regulation, the game will result in a tie.
- C. **TIMEOUTS:** There will be no team timeouts. Officials may call stop the clock for injuries, penalty cards, etc.
- D. **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:
1. Teams will be allowed to play the game with one player down. (Minimum of 5 players)
 2. If enough players arrive within the first half of the game, the game will be played.
 3. The time elapsed will not be added back to the official game clock.
 4. If the team does not have five players by the time the first half has elapsed, the game will be declared a forfeit.
- E. Six (6) players are the maximum number each team may have on the court at any time during the game.
- F. No slide tackles are permitted. A slide tackle will result in a caution from the referee (yellow card: the player must leave the playing area (the game) for a minimum of two (2) minutes). **No substitution is allowed for a carded player.**
- G. No offsides.
- H. **KICKS:**
1. Kickoffs may go forward or backward. All kickoffs are indirect kicks.
 2. Any free/penalty kick from behind the top of the penalty box, including goal kicks, cannot cross mid-court in the air. The ball must touch the ground, a player, or the wall before crossing mid-court. A violation results in an indirect kick at mid-court.
 3. Balls in play can travel across mid-court in the air without penalty.
 4. All goal kicks must clear the penalty area. A re-kick will be given if the ball is touched before the ball clears the penalty area.
- I. Balls hitting the ceiling or basketball goals will be put back into play with an indirect kick near the spot where the ball was initially kicked.
- J. Play will be stopped if the ball enters a dangerous area or injury to a player occurs. Ball will be put back into play with an indirect kick or drop ball, at the referee's discretion.
- K. Balls hitting the side, or the back of the goal net will be declared dead, with a goal kick or corner kick awarded. **Under no circumstances should players attempt to "play" the ball against or behind the net.** Balls hitting the goal post will be live balls.
- L. No throw-ins will be made. All balls which go out of bounds will be put back into play as described

above.

M. Penalty kicks will not be awarded in the 6U age divisions.

N. HEAD BALL

1. Players in the 10U and younger age groups shall not engage in heading, either in practices or in games.
 - i. When a player heads the ball in a game, an indirect free kick should be awarded to the opposing team from the spot of the offense. If the deliberate header occurs within the goal area, the indirect free kick should be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the infringement occurred.
2. Limited heading in practice for players in 12U division.
 - i. More specifically players shall be limited to a maximum of 30 minutes of heading training per week, with no more than 15-20 headers per player, per week.
 - ii. Players in the 12U division may head the ball in game play.
3. Head balls are allowed in 14U and 18U divisions.

O. PENALTIES (YELLOW CARD/RED CARD):

1. Players that receive a caution (yellow card) must leave the playing area (the game) for a minimum of two (2) minutes. **No substitution is allowed for a carded player.** Players must sit out the full two minutes regardless of additional goals scored.
2. Players that receive a second yellow card or a red card during the game must leave the playing area, escorted by a parent or guardian. The team will receive a five (5) minute penalty and must play down a player for the entire five minutes. Upon completion of the five minutes, the team may return to full play of six players.
3. All players are subject to the Department of Recreation, Parks & Tourism Code of Conduct and details stated throughout the section.

P. **GOALKEEPER:** The goalkeeper cannot throw or punt the ball over mid-court in the air. The ball must bounce, roll, or hit a player before crossing mid-court. Goalkeepers will not be allowed a drop-kick to return the ball to play. A violation will result in an indirect kick at mid-court. Goalkeepers may kick the ball directly from the ground with no mid-court violations.

VI. 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 soccer 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. 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.
- E. Coaches are reminded that this league is dedicated to instructing youth in becoming better soccer players. Abuse or violating the Mandatory Play Rule could result in suspension or expulsion of the coach.
- F. Mandatory Play will be accomplished in the following manner:

AGE DIVISIONS 6U, 8U, 10U

1. Every eligible player must play at least 12 minutes in the 6U age level and at least 16 minutes in the 8U, and 10U age levels.
2. Substitutions may be made at the 3, 6, and/or 9-minute (for 6U) and 4, 8, and/or 12 minute (for 8U and 10U) marks of the halves (or as close as possible) on the fly. The clock will not be stopped for substitutions – except when subbing goalies mid-half.
 - i. Subbing will only be allowed for a one-minute time period
 - ii. 6U - Subbing will start at 9:30-minute mark (or as close as possible) and will end at the 8:30-minute mark and will start at the 3:30 minute mark and end at 2:30 minute mark.
 - iii. U8 & U10 - Subbing will start at the 12:30 min mark (or as close as possible) and will end at the 11:30-minute mark and will start at the 4:30 minute mark and end at the 3:30 minute mark.
 - iv. Staff on site will make coaches aware of the beginning and end of the subbing period.
3. Goalies may be substituted at the half or on the fly at the coach's discretion. **If subbing a goalie on the fly, the coach must notify the referee and the opposing coach prior to start of the game of this intention. At the appropriate time the coach will call out to the referee for a goalie sub. The referee will stop the clock at his/her discretion so as not to disrupt a play or offer an unfair advantage to either team. The goalie should not leave the box until the referee stops play.**
4. **Replacement goalies should be ready to enter court as soon as the first goalie exits.** Play will resume with an indirect kick or drop ball at the referee's discretion.
5. Substitutions on the fly must be according to the following guidelines:

- For safety reasons, only one player can substitute at a time.
- A player may not step onto the floor to enter the game until the player coming off the court is within 3 feet from the bench.

AGE DIVISIONS 12U, 14U, 18U

1. Every eligible player must play at least 8 minutes during the first half and are required to play during the second half.
 2. Substitutions during the first half will only be allowed at the 4, 8, and/or 12-minute marks (or as close as possible) on the fly. The clock will not be stopped for substitutions – *except when subbing goalies mid-half*. On the fly substitutions must follow the guidelines as defined for second half play. Goalies may be substituted at the half or on the fly at the coach's discretion. **If subbing a goalie on the fly, the coach must notify the referee and the opposing coach prior to start of the game of this intention. At the appropriate time the coach will call out to the referee for a goalie sub. The referee will stop the clock at his/her discretion so as not to disrupt a play or offer an unfair advantage to either team. The goalie should not leave the box until the referee stops play. Replacement goalies should be ready to enter court as soon as the first goalie exits.** Play will resume with an indirect kick or drop ball at the referee's discretion.
 3. During the second half of the game a coach may substitute at will. Substitutions will be done on the fly according to the following guidelines:
 - All players will be required to play during the second half.
 - For safety reasons, only one player can substitute at a time.
 - A player may not step onto the floor to enter the game until the player coming off the court is within 3 feet from the bench.
 - Teams may be subject to penalty (yellow card) if not following correct substitution procedures.
- G. A player who arrives after the game has started but before the second half begins will still be required to play their full allotted time. A player arriving after the start of the second half will not be subject to the Mandatory Play Rule.
- H. A player who receives a yellow card is still required to meet the minimum mandatory play time.
- I. This rule will be closely monitored. However, it is the coach's responsibility to comply with this rule (i.e., checking with the Facility Attendant or Site Coordinator at half-time to see which players have not fulfilled the mandatory play requirement).
- J. 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 decide on the situation.
- K. 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 second half).
 3. A player who has not fulfilled the conditions of the playing rule receives red card.
- L. 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 decide to waive the mandatory play rule.

VII. EQUIPMENT:

- A. The following will be the official balls and uniforms provided by the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism for the season during games:

6U division will use a #3 size Futsal ball.

8U, 10U, 12U, 14U, 18U divisions will use a #4 size Futsal ball.

- B. All players must wear numbered jerseys. Shorts, sweatpants, and sneakers are allowed. Boots or hard soled shoes of any kind are not allowed. Socks must be worn over shin guards. Team colors are predetermined by the League Coordinator.
- C. The only uniform provided is a jersey, which must be tucked in, and worn for each scheduled game. Not having a game jersey may result in a player not being able to participate in the game. No alteration of the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism jersey is permitted. If a jersey is determined to be altered, the player will not be permitted to play until a new jersey is ordered, paid for and received by the participant.
- D. 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.
1. The goalkeeper must wear a jersey/scrimmage vest of contrasting color from both teams' uniforms.
 2. Shin guards are mandatory for game participation.
 3. Player blood rule in effect. A player who 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.
 4. Mouth pieces are not mandatory but allowed for those who choose to wear them appropriately.
 5. **Jewelry/earrings of any kind are prohibited.**
 6. 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.
 7. 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.
 8. Sweat bands for wrist and head are allowed if worn appropriately.
 9. Items worn for religious reasons must be brought to the attention of the Site Attendant.
 10. No metal belt buckles allowed.
 11. Eyeglasses should be secured with a strap.
 12. Casts of any kind, even if padded, are not allowed.
 13. Food, Gum, Drinks will not be allowed in the gymnasiums.

VIII. 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 on the scoresheet.
- 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 then the \$100.00 will be returned.
- D. League Coordinator has final say in all league decisions.
- E. The league coordinator for the indoor soccer program is Rachel Halmon, Sports Coordinator. Ms. Halmon can be reached at 240-349-3049 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.

IX. CANCELLATION PROCEDURES

- a. All coaches will be notified of any practice/game cancellations via email.
- b. Coaches are required to notify their team 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 care 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:
 - i. *Long QT syndrome*.
 - ii. *Wolff-Parkinson-White (WPW) syndrome*.
 - iii. *Catecholaminergic Polymorphic Ventricular Tachycardia (CPVT)*.
 - c. *Marfan syndrome*: a condition that affects heart valves, walls of major arteries, eyes, and the skeleton.
 - d. Congenital aortic valve abnormalities.
4. *Commotio Cordis*: concussion of the heart from **sudden blunt non-penetrating blow** to the chest
5. 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.

1. It is very important that you **carefully and accurately complete the personal history and family history section** of the "Pre-Participation Physical Evaluation Form" available at

<http://www.mpssaa.org/HealthandSafety/Forms.asp>.

2. Since the majority of these conditions are inherited, **be aware of your family history**, especially if any close family member:
 - a. had sudden unexplained and unexpected death before the age of 50.
 - b. was diagnosed with any of the heart conditions listed above.
 - c. died suddenly /unexpectedly during physical activity, during a seizure, from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) or from drowning.
3. **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.
4. 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.
5. 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