

What Happens When the Bell Rings?

Bridging the Gap Between Athletic Trainers & School Nurses

Working Together for Student Athlete Health

Brad Rohling, PhD, LAT, ATC

Athletics Assistant Director/Athletic Training Coordinator

Rutherford Co Schools

My Background

Work History

- **RCS Athletic Training Coordinator 2004-Present**
- **Football Athletic Trainer at Auburn University**

Education

- **Bachelor's Degree from Middle Tennessee in Athletic Training**
- **Master's Degree from Auburn University in Higher Education Administration**
- **PhD from The University of the Cumberland in Leadership**

Experience

- **TN Athletic Trainers Society Executive Board Member**
 - **Secondary Schools Committee Chair**
- **TSSAA Sports Medicine Advisory Board**

Athletic Training Education

- 2004-Last years of internship
- 2007-Move to computer exam testing
- 2015-Announced move to ELM
- Fall 2022-Last undergrad class enrolled
- Current-Now must all be ELM to be eligible for exam



Accredited Athletic Training Programs

- Cumberland University-Lebanon
- Lee University-Cleveland
- Middle Tennessee State-Murfreesboro
- UTC-Chattanooga
- Proposed-Austin Peay-Clarksville

Quick AT Notes

- All Athletic Trainers are nationally certified and must pass the BOC exam.
- 49/50 states have licensure (CA).
- Areas of practice: Traditional (HS, college, pro), performing arts, industrial, public safety, clinical/physician extender, military

Why This Conversation Matters

- Athletic trainers (ATs) and school nurses are both essential to student health
- Roles often overlap, but communication gaps can occur
- Partnership can create a stronger safety net for students

Understanding Each Role

- Athletic Trainers: Injury prevention, assessment, treatment, rehab, return-to-play
- School Nurses: Chronic illness care, medication management, health advocacy
- Both roles aim to keep students safe, healthy, and ready to learn

Where Our Worlds Overlap

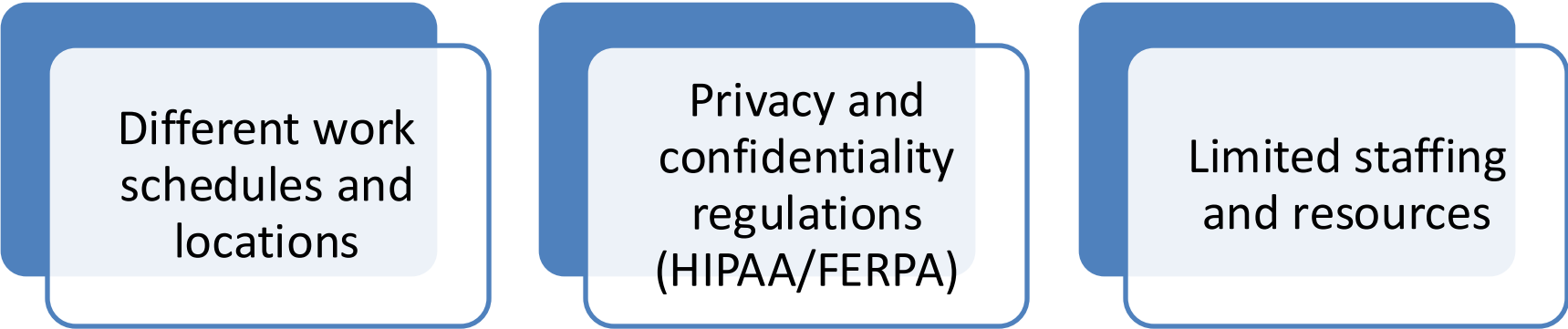
- Concussion management and return-to-learn/play
- Heat illness prevention and follow-up
- Injury follow-up during school hours
- Mental health observation and referrals

Why Collaboration is Essential

- Ensures continuity of care from field to classroom
- Early intervention for emerging health issues
- Improved safety during emergencies
- Better academic outcomes through health support



Challenges to Collaboration



Different work
schedules and
locations

Privacy and
confidentiality
regulations
(HIPAA/FERPA)

Limited staffing
and resources

Positives:

Daily communication if needed

Continued care-be sure we are together on things

Overall teamwork

Negatives:

Turf war

Can be costly to family (Call EMS vs treat)

Specialization Knowledge

- IEP
- 504
- IHP
- Inside
- Skelley
- Soft toss
- Spider Pad

Strategies to Bridge the Gap

- Regular communication (email, shared logs, check-ins)
- Shared protocols for common conditions
- Joint professional development
- Shared documentation systems
- Mutual respect for each other's expertise

Example of Success



- Student concussion managed by both AT and nurse
- Coordinated symptom monitoring and academic adjustments
- Improved recovery time and safe return to activities
- Activity alterations-elevator access, leave class early, etc

Call to Action

- **Remember: We are on the same team — Team Student Health**
- **Start with one joint initiative**
- **Break down silos and commit to collaboration**
- **Better communication = healthier, safer students**

Tennessee Safe Stars



What is Safe Stars?

Safe Stars is a collaboration between the Tennessee Department of Health and the Program for Injury Prevention in Youth Sports at The Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt.

- Safety recognition program for Youth Sports Leagues & Schools
- Free and Voluntary to all organizations across Tennessee
- Can achieve **Gold, Silver, or Bronze** level

Safe Stars goal is to standardize safety for young athletes

TENNESSEE SAFE STARS INITIATIVE

Bronze Level

- Emergency Action Plan (practiced annually)
- Background checks completed on all coaches
- All coaches CPR/AED TRAINED
- AED on site for all practices and games
- All coaches trained in concussion, heat illness, and sudden cardiac arrest recognition/management
- Severe weather policy (including heat and lightning)
- Anaphylaxis and Allergy Emergency plan
- Safeguarding Policy for preventing and reporting child abuse and neglect
- Code of conduct



TENNESSEE SAFE STARS INITIATIVE

Silver Level (Choose 2)

Gold Level (Choose 4)

- Pre-participation Physical Examination (PPE) required
- Risk and safety information/policies relayed to parents/guardians
- All coaches complete additional health, safety and injury prevention training
- All athletic equipment undergoes safety checks
- Medical professional (ATC, first responder, etc.) on site for practices/games
- ALL coaches CPR/AED certified
- On site tobacco policy / “Young Lungs at Play”
- Promote positive culture and standard of expectations regarding behavior via Coaching Boys Into Men and Athletes as Leaders
- Opioid abuse awareness/education



- FREE to apply
- FREE resources to meet criteria
- ALL schools & youth sports organizations eligible

Currently 64 schools and leagues that are Gold Star Level



The background of the image is a high-angle, slightly blurred photograph of an American football field. The green turf is marked with white yard lines and numbers. The number '40' is clearly visible in the lower center, with '30' and '50' partially visible above it. The perspective is from above, looking down at the field.

SAFE STARS ACT

Safe Stars Act

- TN State Law (SB1259 & HB 1410)
- Developing and implementing policy-best case practices (heat, concussion, cardiac, lightning, background check)
- First in US
- Ensures minimum standard statewide
- Began in 22-23 school year



State of Tennessee

PUBLIC CHAPTER NO. 272

SENATE BILL NO. 1259

By Reeves, Gilmore

Substituted for: House Bill No. 1410

By Baum, Carringer, Hardaway, Smith, Gillespie, Helton, Doggett, Garrett, Powell

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49 and Title 68, relative to athletics.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. This act is known and may be cited as the "Safe Stars Act."

SECTION 2. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 6, is amended by adding the following as a new part:

49-6-1501.

(a) As used in this part:

(1) "LEA" has the same meaning as defined in § 49-1-103; and

(2) "School youth athletic activity" has the same meaning as defined in § 68-55-501.

(b) Beginning with the 2022-2023 school year for each LEA and public charter school that provides a school youth athletic activity, the following safety standards must be implemented:

(1) All coaches, whether employed by the LEA or public charter school or a volunteer, shall:

(A) Annually complete the concussion recognition and head injury safety education course program required under § 68-55-502;

(B) Annually complete the sudden cardiac arrest education program required under § 68-6-103;

(C) Receive training in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and in the use of automated external defibrillators (AEDs); and

(D) Comply with all applicable background check and fingerprinting requirements of § 49-5-413; and

(2) The following plans and policies must be implemented at each public school, including public charter schools, for school youth athletic activities:

(A) An allergy and anaphylaxis emergency response plan that:

(i) Identifies the signs and symptoms of allergic reactions, including severe allergic reactions and anaphylaxis;

(ii) Provides information relating to the storage, location, use, and administration of epinephrine auto-injectors; and

(iii) Includes emergency follow-up procedures;

SENATE BILL NO. 1259

PASSED: April 19, 2021


RANDY McNALLY
SPEAKER OF THE SENATE

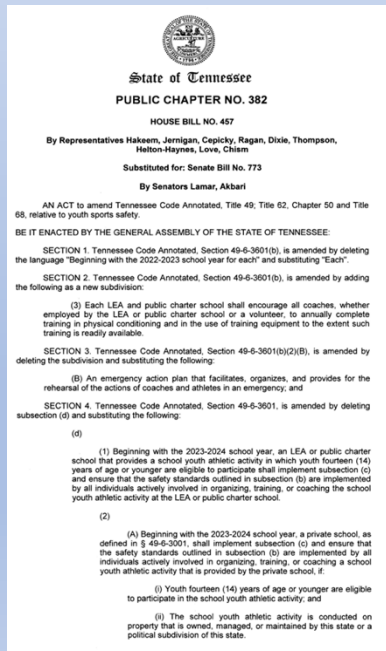

CAMERON SEXTON, SPEAKER
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APPROVED this 30th day of April 2021


BILL LEE, GOVERNOR

Safe Stars Act Amendment

- Beginning 23-24 school year
- Must practice Emergency Action Plan
- Includes private schools and city leagues



HB457

(B) Private schools are encouraged to comply with the safety standards outlined in subsections (b) and (c) for school youth athletic activities that are not subject to the requirements of subdivision (d)(2)(A).

(3) Cities, counties, businesses, and nonprofit organizations that organize a community-based youth athletic activity, as defined in §§ 68-6-102 and 68-55-501:

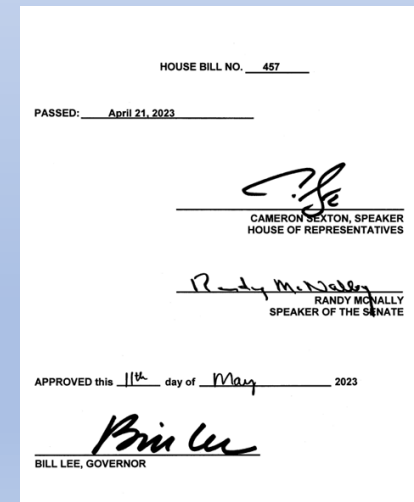
(A) Are encouraged to comply with the safety standards outlined in subdivisions (b)(1)-(3) and subsection (c); and

(B) Shall ensure that at least one (1) individual who is actively involved in organizing, training, or coaching the community-based youth athletic activity has completed, and is in compliance with, the safety standards applicable to coaches and volunteers outlined in subdivisions (b)(1)-(3) and subsection (c), and that at least one (1) individual who has completed, and is in compliance with, the safety standards applicable to coaches and volunteers outlined in subdivisions (b)(1)-(3) and subsection (c) is present at each practice and competition of a community-based youth athletic activity, if:

(i) Youth fourteen (14) years of age or younger are eligible to participate in the community-based youth athletic activity; and

(ii) The community-based youth athletic activity is conducted on property that is owned, managed, or maintained by this state or a political subdivision of this state.

SECTION 5. This act takes effect July 1, 2023, the public welfare requiring it.









Questions?
rohlingb@rcschools.net

