NCAA Banned Drugs and Medical Exceptions Policy
Guidelines Regarding Medical Reporting
for Student-Athletes with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
Taking Prescribed Stimulants

The NCAA bans classes of drugs because they can harm student-athletes and can create an unfair advantage in competition. Some legitimate medications contain NCAA banned substances, and student-athletes may need to use these medicines to support their academics and their general health. The NCAA has a procedure to review and approve legitimate use of medications that contain NCAA banned substances through a Medical Exceptions Procedure. The diagnosis of adult ADHD remains clinically based utilizing clinical interviews, symptom-rating scales, and subjective reporting from patients and others. The following guidelines will help institutions ensure adequate medical records are on file for student-athletes diagnosed with ADHD in order to request an exception in the event a student-athlete tests positive during NCAA Drug Testing.

1. General considerations. Student-athletes diagnosed with ADHD in childhood should provide records of the ADHD assessment and history of treatment. Student-athletes treated since childhood with ADHD stimulant medication but who do not have records of childhood ADHD assessment, or who are initiating treatment as an adult, must undergo a comprehensive evaluation to establish a diagnosis of ADHD. There are currently no formal guidelines or standards of care for the evaluation and management of adult ADHD. The diagnosis is based on a clinical evaluation. ADHD is a neurobiological disorder that should be assessed by an experienced clinician and managed by a physician to improve the functioning and quality of life of an individual.

    a. Student-athletes should have access to a comprehensive continuum of care including educational, behavioral, psychosocial and pharmacological services provided by licensed practitioners who have experience in the diagnosis and management of ADHD. Student-athletes treated with ADHD stimulant medication should receive, at a minimum, annual clinical evaluations.

    b. Mental health professionals who evaluate and prescribe medical therapy for student-athletes with ADHD should have appropriate training and experience in the diagnosis and management of ADHD and should have access to consultation and referral resources, such as appropriate medical specialists.

    c. Primary care professionals providing mental health services (specifically the prescribing of stimulants) for student-athletes with ADHD should have experience in the diagnosis and management of ADHD and should have access to consultation and referral resources (e.g., qualified mental health professionals as well as other appropriate medical specialists).

2. Recommended ways to facilitate academic, athletics, occupational and psychosocial success in the college athlete with adult ADHD taking prescribed stimulants include:

    a. Access to practitioners experienced in the diagnosis and management of adult ADHD.

    b. A timely, comprehensive clinical evaluation and appropriate diagnosis using current medical standards.

c. Access to disability services.

d. Appropriate medical reporting to athletics departments/sports medicine staff.

e. Regular mental health/general medical follow-up.

3. Student-Athlete Document Responsibility. The student-athlete's documentation from the prescribing physician to the athletics departments/ sports medicine staff should contain a minimum of the following information to help ensure that ADHD has been diagnosed and is being managed appropriately (see Attachment for physician letter criteria):

   a. Description of the evaluation process which identifies the assessment tools and procedures.

   b. Statement of the Diagnosis, including when it was confirmed.

   c. History of ADHD treatment (previous/ongoing).

   d. Statement that a non-banned ADHD alternative has been **considered** if a stimulant is currently prescribed.

   e. Statement regarding follow-up and monitoring visits.

4. Institutional Document Responsibility. The institution should note ADHD treatment in the student-athlete's medical record on file in the athletics department. In order to request a medical exception for ADHD stimulant medication use, it is important for the institution to have on file documentation that an evaluation has been conducted, the student-athlete is undergoing medical care for the condition, and the student-athlete is being treated appropriately. The institution should keep the following on confidential file:

   a. Record of the student-athlete's evaluation.

   b. Statement of the Diagnosis, including when it was confirmed.

   c. History of ADHD treatment (previous/ongoing).

   d. Copy of the most recent prescription (as documented by the prescribing physician).

5. Requesting an NCAA Medical Exception:

   a. The student-athlete should report the banned medication to the institution upon matriculation or when treatment commences in order for the student-athlete to be eligible for a medical exception in the event of a positive drug test.

   b. A student-athlete's medical records or physician's letter should **not** be sent to the NCAA, unless requested by the NCAA.

   c. The use of the prescribed stimulant medication **does not** need to be reported at the time of NCAA drug testing.

   d. Documentation should be submitted by the institution in the event a student-athlete tests positive for the banned stimulant.

Note: The NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports may approve stimulant medication use for ADHD without a prior trial of a non-stimulant medication. Although the NCAA Medical Exception Policy requires that a non-banned medication be considered, the medical community has generally accepted that the non-stimulant medications may not be as effective in the treatment of ADHD for some in this age group.

ATTACHMENT

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Guideline Attachment

Criteria for letter from prescribing Physician to provide documentation to the Athletics Department/Sports Medicine staff regarding assessment of student-athletes taking prescribed stimulants for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), in support of an NCAA Medical Exception request for the use of a banned substance.

The following must be included in supporting documentation:

- Student-athlete name.
- Student-athlete date of birth.
- Date of clinical evaluation.
- Clinical evaluation components including:

    - Summary of comprehensive clinical evaluation (referencing DSM-IV criteria) -- attach supporting documentation.
    - ADHD Rating Scale(s) (e.g., Connors, ASRS, CAARS) scores and report summary -- attach supporting documentation.
    - Blood pressure and pulse readings and comments.
    - Note that alternative non-banned medications have been considered, and comments.
    - Diagnosis.
    - Medication(s) and dosage.
    - Follow-up orders.

Additional ADHD evaluation components if available:

- Report ADHD symptoms by other significant individual(s).
- Psychological testing results.
- Physical exam date and results.
- Laboratory/testing results.
- Summary of previous ADHD diagnosis.
- Other comments.

Documentation from prescribing physician must also include the following:

- Physician name (Printed)
- Office address and contact information.
- Specialty.
- Physician signature and date.

DISCLAIMER: The National Collegiate Athletic Association shall not be liable or responsible, in any way, for any diagnosis or other evaluation made, or exam performed, in connection herewith, or for any subsequent action taken, in whole or in part, in reliance upon the accuracy or veracity of the information provided hereunder.