



Athlete Mental Health Alliance

2024 Report



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Executive Summary

In 2023, Athletes for Hope launched the Athlete Mental Health Alliance (AMHA) to address the mental health needs of athletes through legislative advocacy, research, and athlete participation.

Key accomplishments of the Alliance include the consolidation of the Athlete Mental Health Legislation List, the establishment of the Athlete Mental Health Research Hub, and the successful execution of an Advocacy Day. The Alliance functions through three committees: Athlete Advisory, Legislative, and Research, each overseen by esteemed professionals and former athletes. From January 2024 to July 2024, AMHA engaged with more than 300 individual athletes and oversaw several initiatives, including Athlete Mental Health Week and the Whole Being Athlete Talks Podcast. Looking forward, AMHA aims to engage in the Athlete Mental Health Summit, co-lead the second Athlete Mental Health Week in 2025, and persist in advocating for systemic reforms. We thank our supporters for their unwavering dedication to championing athlete mental health.

Acknowledgements

The Athlete Mental Health Alliance (AMHA) 2024 Report is a testament to the extraordinary collaborative efforts of countless individuals. We are deeply grateful to everyone who dedicated their time, expertise, and passion to advancing the mental health and well-being of athletes worldwide.

To our committee chairs and members—Kaitlyn Lyle, Blake Palmquist, Lisa Devine, and Dr. Robert Elsner—your leadership, dedication, and vision have been instrumental to AMHA’s success. The countless hours you devoted to planning, strategizing, and executing our initiatives have made a lasting impact on the mental health landscape for athletes.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Suzanne Potts, Hailey Wetherill, Phill Richards, and Mina Anglero for composing this report and shaping it into a reflection of AMHA’s collective accomplishments.

Special recognition goes to Alexis Sales, Marianna Williamson, and Matthew Triplet for their invaluable contributions in finalizing and refining the report. Your commitment and attention to detail have been essential in bringing this work to life.

Letter from Chairs

Dear Members, Partners, and Supporters,

As we reflect on the past year's accomplishments, we are both humbled and inspired by the progress made by the Athlete for Hope's Athlete Mental Health Alliance. The collective effort of our dedicated community has brought us closer to achieving our mission: to leverage the lived experiences and amplify the voices of athletes demanding a change in the sport system around mental health. Through rigorous research, relentless advocacy, and strong partnerships, we have taken significant strides in developing a national plan to support athletes of all ages in their mental health journey.

Our vision to elevate the 'athlete voice' in leading mental health solutions has never been clearer. We believe that each athlete's voice powerful in advocating for and establishing universal mental health rights. The united efforts of these voices have been instrumental in engaging lawmakers and pushing for legislative change that ensures mental health protections for all athletes.

We are proud to share some of our key achievements from this past year:

- Establishment of the Athlete Mental Health Legislation Bill Tracker
- Establishment of the Athlete Mental Health Research Hub
- Successful Athlete Mental Health Advocacy Day
- Implementation of Athlete Mental Health Check-Ins
- Creation of our Athlete Mental Health Petition
- Launch of our Whole Being Athlete Talks Podcast

These achievements are a testament to the power of collective action and the unwavering commitment of our community. We sincerely thank each of you for your support, dedication, and belief in our mission and vision.

As we move forward, we remain steadfast in our resolve to champion the mental health rights of athletes. Together, we will continue to elevate athlete voices, drive legislative change, and create a sports system that prioritizes and supports the mental well-being of every athlete.

Thank you for being a part of this journey with us!

Kaitlyn Lyle

Athlete Advisory Committee Co-Chair

Lisa Devine

Legislative Committee Chair

Blake Palmquist

Athlete Advisory Committee Co-Chair

Dr. Robert Elsner

Research Committee Chair

AMHA Overview

In October 2023, Athletes for Hope launched the Athlete Mental Health Alliance (AMHA), an initiative dedicated to addressing the mental health needs of athletes. The Alliance was created with the purpose of uniting a diverse group of stakeholders to advocate for comprehensive changes in the way athlete mental health is approached, both through legislation and in practice. Central to AMHA's efforts was the Athlete Mental Health Rights Document—a foundational document crafted by athletes aimed at standardizing mental health rights across the sports industry. These principles, framed as steps towards safeguarding athlete mental health at all levels, serve as a benchmark to garner interest and support within our athlete network, demonstrating that athlete mental health has a strong advocacy foundation.

With a vision to elevate the collective “athlete voice,” AMHA aims to spearhead mental health interventions and support for athletes. By uniting these voices, the Alliance seeks to collaborate with lawmakers to establish universal legislation that ensures mental health rights for all athletes. AMHA’s comprehensive approach aims to create a supportive and standardized framework that addresses the unique mental health challenges athletes face to create a healthier and more resilient sports community.

To achieve this ambitious goal, AMHA is committed to leveraging the personal experiences of athletes to demand systemic change within around mental health in sports environments. AMHA operates through three distinct committees: the Athlete Advisory Committee, the Legislative Committee, and the Research Committee. Each of these committees meet monthly to address their specific goals and contribute to AMHA’s broader mission and vision, ensuring that the athlete’s voice remains at the forefront of all initiatives.

Although each committee has a distinct role, they are united by a shared commitment to amplifying the experiences and needs of athletes. This athlete-centered approach ensures that the work of AMHA reflects the real-world challenges faced by those it seeks to support. Beyond their regular meetings, AMHA, as a whole, convenes quarterly. These gatherings are crucial opportunities for cross-committee collaboration, briefings, and updates. Through this structured and unified effort, AMHA remains steadfast in its mission to advocate for the mental health rights of athletes, driven by the collective strength of their voices.





Legislative Committee

The Legislative Committee takes on the critical role of advocating for universal athlete mental health rights. Composed of various legislative stakeholders and led by Lisa Devine, this committee tracks, supports, and advances legislative efforts that foster legal changes benefiting athletes' mental health.

Lisa Devine is the Policy & Advocacy Coordinator for Alston for Athletes, where she spearheads advocacy initiatives to enhance mental health awareness within the athletic community. Her dedication is evident in her efforts to promote mental health and wellness, raise awareness about behavioral and mental distress, and improve access to mental health services.



Athlete Advisory Committee

The Athlete Advisory Committee comprises of current and former athletes who provide invaluable insights based on their experiences. This committee is integral to the Alliance, consulting on its activities to ensure athletes' perspectives are fully integrated into all aspects of AMHA's work. Led by Kaitlyn Lyle and Blake Palmquist, the committee is dedicated to empowering athletes to recognize their value beyond their sports achievements and to supporting mental health awareness initiatives.

Kaitlyn Lyle, a Division I gymnast and Whole Being Athlete Ambassador at the University of California, Davis, is dedicated to empowering athletes to recognize their value beyond their sports achievements.



Blake Palmquist, hailing from Bozeman, Montana, began his soccer journey at a young age with aspirations of playing professionally. Through his personal experiences, he discovered a passion for advocating for athletes facing similar struggles. Blake is now dedicated to supporting mental health awareness and assisting athletes and individuals dealing with mental health issues, aiming to make a meaningful difference in their lives.



Research Committee

The Research Committee focuses on gathering and disseminating research that underpins AMHA's mental health principles and legislative initiatives. By staying aligned with the latest findings, this committee ensures that the Alliance's advocacy is informed by the most current and robust data available. Headed by Dr. Robert Elsner, the committee plays a pivotal role in advancing the understanding of mental health challenges athletes face.

Dr. Robert Elsner serves as Professor and Chair of Psychology at Samford University. With extensive experience leading research projects and programs internationally, Dr. Elsner has contributed significantly to the field of psychology. His background as a college lacrosse player and former professor of Family and Community Medicine provides him with unique insights into athletes and mental health. Dr. Elsner has been teaching sport psychology for over 20 years, combining his academic and personal experiences to advance understanding in this field.



Key Initiatives

Each of the committees within the Alliance has a specific charter that captures the goals and deliverables of their work.

Athlete Advisory Committee

The primary objective of the Athlete Committee is to develop and implement strategies that support the holistic well-being of athletes. This involves identifying effective resources, amplifying athlete voices, and creating supportive programs to enhance their overall health and success.

Goals

- **Identifying Effective Resources and Information Dissemination**
 - Sharing Low-Cost Resources: Compile and share a comprehensive list of low-cost resources such as therapy, government services, and on-campus facilities, ensuring these are readily accessible to athletes.
 - Engaging Potential Partners: Collaborate with potential partners who provide these resources, ensuring their services are well-integrated and widely known among athletes.
- **Elevating Athlete Voices:**
 - Effective Communication Strategies: Implement various methods to elevate athlete voices, promoting openness and communication among athletes.
 - Purpose Beyond Sport: Develop initiatives to help athletes discover their purpose beyond their sports, fostering a sense of identity and fulfillment outside of athletic achievements.
 - Destigmatizing Help-Seeking: Create a safe environment where athletes feel comfortable seeking help, ensuring they understand that utilizing resources will not negatively impact their performance.

Deliverables

- **Resource Compilation and Dissemination**
 - Create and maintain a list of low-cost mental health resources.
 - Establish partnerships to enhance resource availability.
 - Develop best practices for resource dissemination based on feedback from collegiate athletes.
- **Athlete Voice Elevation:**
 - Implement strategies to promote athlete communication and openness.
 - Develop programs to assist athletes in finding purpose beyond their sport.
 - Create initiatives to destigmatize help-seeking behaviors among athletes.



Legislative Committee

The primary objective of the Legislative Committee is to spearhead and support legislative initiatives that enhance mental health and wellness within the athletic community. This involves advocating for increased access to mental health services for athletes of all levels and ages, and educating stakeholders on the importance of these legislative changes.

Goals

- **Legislative Advocacy and Support**
 - Actively pursue and back legislative changes at both the national and state levels. Key target states include Ohio, Maryland, California, Washington, Texas, and Kentucky. These changes aim to improve mental health resources and support systems for athletes.
- **Promotion of Mental Health Awareness**
 - Establish designated mental health days, weeks, or months for student-athletes, following the model of Hilinski's Hope's Student-Athlete Mental Health Week. This initiative seeks to normalize and prioritize mental health awareness in the athletic community.
- **Enhanced Communication and Resource Availability**
 - Ensure continuous communication to keep student-athletes informed about relevant legislation and available mental health resources, both nationally and locally.

Deliverables

- **Legislative Resource Map**
 - Develop a comprehensive map detailing mental health legislation across the country. This resource will offer up-to-date information on current legislative efforts and outcomes.
- **Proclamations for Athlete Mental Health Week**
 - Present proclamations to establish Athlete Mental Health Week in various states, further promoting mental health awareness and support.
- **Awareness Toolkits**
 - Create and distribute toolkits designed to raise awareness about mental health issues. These toolkits will be tailored to different communities and disseminated to maximize impact.
- **Centralized Resource Hub**
 - Compile and integrate resources from various organizations into a centralized hub. This hub will serve as a go-to resource for athletes, providing them with easy access to mental health support and information.



Research Committee

The primary objective of the Research Committee is to serve as an instigator, facilitator, and clearinghouse for research focused on the mental health conditions and challenges faced by athletes. In collaboration with other committees within AMHA, the Research Committee aims to integrate the experiences of researchers and athletes to effectively address the needs of athletes, clinicians, coaches, policymakers, caregivers, and other stakeholders. By doing so, the committee strives to enhance the mental health support framework for athletes at various levels.

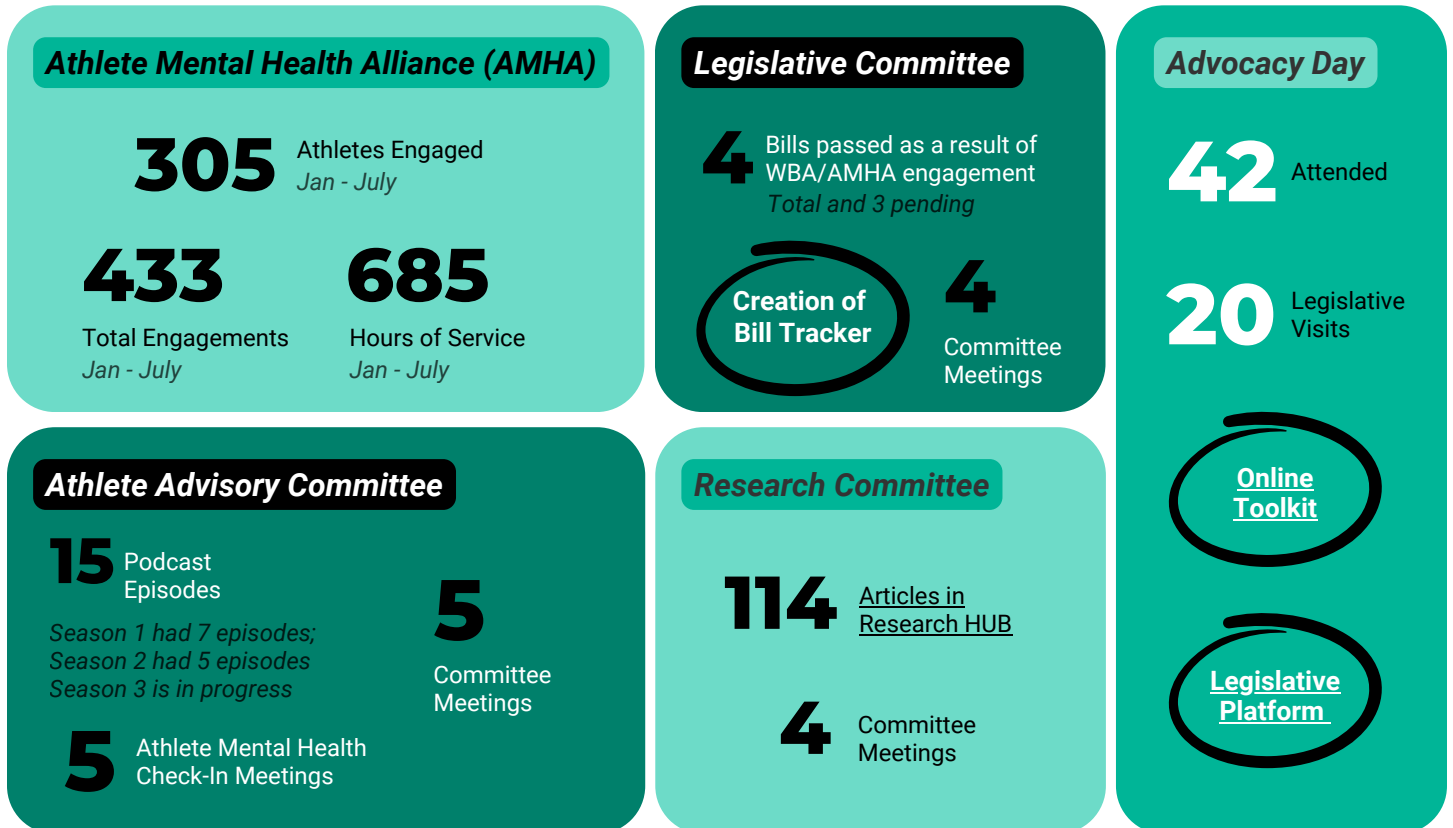
Goals

- **Evidence-Based Practices:**
 - Advocate for the use of evidence-based mental health practices in sports. Collect and disseminate research on best practices.
- **Resource Mapping:**
 - Develop a national database of mental health resources and legislative efforts for athletes.
- **Research Collaboration:**
 - Facilitate collaboration between researchers, athletes, and organizations to ensure the most relevant and effective research is conducted.
- **Educational Initiatives:**
 - Create seminars and training programs based on current research to educate athletes, coaches, and other stakeholders on mental health.

Deliverables

- **Identify Research Needs and Gaps**
 - Conduct a thorough review of existing research on the mental health of athletes.
 - Identify gaps and areas where further research is needed to support legislative efforts to protect and aid athletes.
- **Research Hub**
 - Collect and organize pertinent research findings into a comprehensive hub.
 - Ensure AMHA personnel can access this repository to support the organization's mission.
- **Research Coordination and Advocacy**
 - Engage with researchers and funding agencies to prioritize and fund research that addresses athletes' mental health and wellbeing.
 - Coordinate efforts to challenge existing paradigms and encourage innovative research approaches that benefit athletes' mental health.

Impact and Outcomes



Throughout this past year, a few unintended outcomes or opportunities have evolved into different, yet essential components of this work. Several notable activations became crucial aspects of this work. The AFH team collaborated with Kym and Mark Hilinski to host the first-ever Athlete Mental Health Week from May 4-11, 2024. Building off the opportunity that the Hilinski's Hope team brings to Student-Athletes each fall, this group envisioned opportunities for individual athletes and organizations at all levels of sport to activate, share social media graphics, hold mental health walks and other advocacy opportunities throughout the week. 194 people signed up to support the initial Athlete Mental Health Week.

Additionally, the Athlete Mental Health Bill of Rights concept evolved into a more tangible Petition that all could share and sign to show their support for the foundational items put forth in the original Bill of Rights document. As legislative opportunities evolved, it seemed pertinent that these concepts be shared publicly, yet have a broader impact than waiting for a

targeted bill to pass support these key elements. This became an Athlete Mental Health Petition that was ultimately shared and signed by more than 198 individual athletes.

Additionally, organic connections among athletes and participants have grown to include an external group chat and monthly mental health check-ins through Zooms. This sense of community and belonging helped bring more athletes to the AMHA space and encouraged honest and thoughtful dialogue among the athlete network. It was an excellent example of an unintended outcome that helped shape the overall experience for participants.

- Athlete Mental Health Week - 194 participants
- Group Chats with Committees
- Networking opportunities
- [Athlete Mental Health Petition](#)

What We Have Learned

- Effective, regular communication is key to advancing athlete mental health initiatives.
- Collaboration among passionate individuals and organizations drives meaningful change.
- Including athlete voices in program development ensures relevance to their needs.
- Legislative change takes time and sustained advocacy.
- Coordinated legislative efforts can enhance mental health support for athletes.
- A centralized hub of mental health resources is needed for easy access.
- Regular mental health check-ins and a supportive community are crucial.
- Evidence-based research ensures effective mental health interventions.
- Ongoing involvement from all alliance members is essential for progress.

Future Plans/Suggestions

We are working in this space to amplify athlete voices because we believe in the power of their lived experiences to drive meaningful change. We plan to continue leveraging these experiences and voices to demand mental health improvements in the sports. Through research, advocacy, storytelling, and partnership, the Alliance aims to develop a national plan that supports athletes of all ages, with input and prioritization of their voices in its creation and implementation.

Upcoming Initiatives

- Participation in Athlete Mental Health Summit through the newly formed Coalition of Athletic Communities for Mental Health Feb 2025
- Co-leading the second Athlete Mental Health Week with Hilinski's Hope, Sarah Shulze Foundation, and the Kevin Love Fund; February 1-9, 2025, with AMHA support
- Continued Dissemination of Athlete Mental Health Research
- Hosting a third Advocacy Day 2025

Suggestions for Improvement

- Offer volunteer positions for AMHA
- Have more committee members lead meetings for flexibility
- Provide clear guides on how to get involved
- Advocacy spotlights for AMHA members creating legislative or research change in communities (i.e. Alston for Athletes or The Ohio State Coach Beyond Mental Health Program)
- Reduce meetings to once a month to eliminate scheduling conflicts
- Use breakout rooms in big meetings for focused discussions.
- Integrate AFHs Mental Health team talks into AMHA activities, focusing on promoting check-ins, recognizing warning signs, practicing mental health skills, and reducing stigma





Concluding Remarks

The Athlete Mental Health Alliance (AMHA) exists to amplify athletes’ voices, recognizing that their experiences are essential in driving change within the sports system. We believe that mental health is as crucial as physical health, and our efforts over the past year have shown the power of collective action in advancing this cause.

We've learned that while there is a strong desire among athletes and supporters to contribute, many face obstacles such as scheduling conflicts and uncertainty about how to get involved. These challenges have only reinforced our commitment to creating more accessible and flexible avenues for participation, ensuring that every voice can be heard and every contribution can make a difference.

Looking ahead, we remain dedicated to advocating for systemic change and supporting the mental health of athletes at all levels. With the continued support of our community, we are confident in our ability to create a sports environment that values and protects the well-being of every athlete.

Thank you for joining us on this journey. Together, we will continue to championing athlete mental health and building a stronger future.

Get Involved. Be Inspired.

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