



athlete
mental health
alliance

Athletes Leading Change in Mental Health

Through lived experience, research, and advocacy, the Athlete Mental Health Alliance (AMHA) amplifies athlete voices to drive systemic change and build a national plan for mental health in sport.



www.athletesforhope.org
contact@athletesforhope.org





Mission

As an alliance, our mission is to leverage athlete voices and lived experience to drive collaboration, influence policy, and transform how sport addresses mental health.

Through athlete storytelling, research, and advocacy, we are advancing a national plan—designed with athletes, for athletes—that supports mental well-being across the sport system.

Vision

Our vision is to elevate the athlete voice as the driving force behind mental health solutions at every level of sport. Together, these voices will lead the way in partnering with lawmakers to advance universal legislation that establishes mental health as a fundamental right for all athletes.

Implementation

We aim to connect a group of interested members and align on advocacy efforts to advance legislation, research, and resources towards a standardized athlete mental health process, utilizing our Athlete Mental Health Guiding Principles as a foundational document, created by and for athletes.

Athlete Mental Health is a Human Right

Studies have shown that elite athletes are at a higher risk of mental disorders than the general public. This risk is magnified amongst athletes who are injured, retired/retiring, and performing below expectations. To date, there is no systematic process at the elite level for screening, intervention, or support around athlete mental health; and no one entity who is responsible for this system of care. The same can be said for youth sports development programs, where almost 60 million U.S. youth are engaged each year in competitive sports programming with little or no oversight.

Who this Impacts

Athletics is a system with many stakeholders who participate in ensuring the mental and physical well-being of athletes. With this alliance, we hope to impact and connect:

- Current and Former Athletes
- Youth Sports Participants
- Athlete Mental Health Organizations
- Parents of Athletes
- Sport Governing Bodies
- Coaches, Athletic Trainers and Athletic Directors
- Social Workers, Psychologists, and Clinicians
- Legislators

Alliance Framework

The alliance consists of 3 committees that meet monthly to work on their deliverables and advance the mission and vision of the alliance and support each participating organization.

Each respective committee has an important role and different responsibilities to bring forth legislative change. The common thread throughout all 3 committees is the athlete voice, which is present in every committee to ensure that the work of the alliance is always centered on the athlete experience.

The Athlete Mental Health Alliance meets as a whole on a quarterly basis, with the intent to brief the other committees on the work that's being done and offer other updates pertaining to the work of the alliance.

Alliance Model

AMHA utilizes an athlete centered approach that prioritizes the voice and experiences of athletes to inform the work of the alliance.



Legislative Committee – Engages legislative stakeholders to advocate for the alliance and athlete mental health guiding principles.

Research Committee – Compiles and shares research to inform athlete mental health principles and legislative efforts.

Athlete Advisory Committee – Current and former athletes who advise the alliance based on lived experience.

Alliance Committee

Research Committee Chairs



Robert J.F. Elsner, PhD, DMin

Robert J.F. Elsner, PhD, DMin, is Professor and Chair of Psychology at Samford University. He has led international research projects, served on numerous editorial boards, and was Editor-in-Chief of *Current Research in Psychology* for five years. A former collegiate lacrosse player and professor of Family and Community Medicine, he brings broad perspectives on athletes and mental health and has taught Sport Psychology for more than 20 years.



Justin E. Morales, MD

Justin E. Morales, MD, is a fourth-year psychiatry resident at NYU and incoming Addiction Fellow at Massachusetts General Brigham (Harvard). After earning his BS in Biology, he served as Class President for four years at Howard University College of Medicine and graduated with academic and professionalism honors (AOA and GHHS). His interests include addiction psychiatry, sports psychiatry, neuromodulation, and psychotherapy.



Dr. Lily Kurtz

Dr. Lily Kurtz is a board certified Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner actively practicing in New York City. After earning her Doctor of Psychiatric Nursing Practice from Columbia University, she has focused on providing comprehensive mental health care to current and former athletes of all levels. She also holds a degree in Cognitive Brain Science from Tufts University, where she swam all four years- earning Scholastic All American, All Conference, and All American Consideration honors. Dr. Kurtz's goal is to ensure that seeking care does not involve the additional pressure of being forced to choose between mental wellness or peak performance.

Alliance Committee

Legislative Committee Chairs



Doria Josma

Doria is a nonprofit leader with a background in policy analysis, advocacy, and equity-centered leadership. With over a decade of experience in direct service and administration, she specializes in fundraising and philanthropy initiatives that address social issues and strengthen nonprofit visibility. She is the Founder of Your Why LLC and is passionate about arts and culture, social justice, and empowering youth and women.



Matt Triplet

Matt is the head boys lacrosse coach at St. Francis DeSales High School in Columbus, Ohio, and Policy & Advocacy Director for Alston for Athletes. A former Ohio State lacrosse player, he has coached at DeSales since 2005 and led the team to multiple state championships. His advocacy for athlete mental health grew from a pivotal moment with a player in 2018, shaping his mission to help coaches support both performance and well-being.

Alliance Committee

Athlete Advisory Committee Chairs



Kaitlyn Lyle

Kaitlyn is a former Division I gymnast and graduate of the University of California, Davis, where she earned a degree in Psychology with minors in Education and Spanish. She advocates for athlete mental health and representation, working with researchers, legislators, and coaches to advance supportive policies and practices. Her work focuses on integrating psychological tools into coaching to help athletes perform at a high level while protecting their well-being.



AJ Pedro

AJ is a former Division I wrestler and graduate of Brown University with a degree in Business, Entrepreneurship, and Organizational Studies. As CEO of Pedro Peak Performance, he helps athletes reach their full potential through a balanced approach to training, nutrition, and mindset. He is committed to increasing awareness and support for the mental and physical challenges athletes face during and beyond their careers.

Guiding Principles Background

Our research on athlete mental health was done in consultation with current and former athletes, academia and literature, and those who work closely with athletes, including family members, coaches, and organizational staff. This not only guided the alliance structure, but resulted in the following draft recommendations:

Athletes have the rights to...

- Healthy bodies and healthy body images
- Support in career transition
- Adequately manage injury
- Mental health support for performance on and off the field
- Timely referrals to mental health experts for psychological disorders and conditions
- Equal and equitable access to mental health
- Training, education, and awareness focused upon the importance of mental wellness, identifying mental health conditions, and finding mental health resources.
- Coaches and trainers who are trauma informed, and have some level of mental health training.

Timeline

For the next 12 months (through December 2026) we plan to host a variety of different events and initiatives in an effort to promote athlete mental health:

January 14	First Alliance Meeting of the Year
February 2-8	Athlete Mental Health Week
April 15	Second Alliance Meeting of the Year
May 13	Virtual Mental Health Advocacy Day
July	Third Alliance Meeting of the Year
October	Fourth Alliance Meeting of the Year
October 10	World Mental Health Day Initiative
December	AMHA Year-End Report
Monthly	AMHA newsletters with resources and events from our alliance partners, AMHA Committee meetings

Be on the Lookout For:

- Ongoing athlete storytelling
- Research reviews and presentations
- Ongoing legislative advocacy efforts (local, state, and national)
- Best practices in athlete mental health programming



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Join the Athlete Mental Health Alliance

Scan the QR code or visit athletesforhope.org.

Email amha@athletesforhope.org

