



**NATIONAL FEDERATION
OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL
ASSOCIATIONS**

Mailing Address:
PO Box 690 | Indianapolis, Indiana 46206
Phone: 317-972-6900 | Fax: 317.822.5700
www.nfhs.org

Shipping Address:
NFHS Distribution Center
1802 Alonzo Watford Sr. Drive
Indianapolis, Indiana 46202

Memorandum

To: State Association Executive Directors and Commissioners

From: Davis Whitfield, NFHS Executive Director
Bob Colgate, NFHS Director of Sports and Sports Medicine

Subject: Continued Research—Updated Catastrophic Injury and Fatality Reporting Forms

Date: August 7, 2026

The National Center for Catastrophic Sport Injury Research (NCCSIR) is a research center that tracks severe sports injuries in the United States. The NCCSIR is directed by Dr. Kristen Kucera at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. It has tracked fatalities and catastrophic injuries for all sports in high schools, including cheerleading, across the nation since 1982.

It is important that you contact each school in your state to inform them of the catastrophic data collection system that is in place. We are concerned that many of the schools are not aware of this program and are not informing the state offices when a catastrophic athletic injury, illness or medical condition occurs. Many important decisions (rule changes, equipment changes, insurance rates, etc.) are based on this data, and it is essential that we have accurate information. Excellent examples are the swimming and diving and pole vault rule changes that have been implemented because of analysis of the data collected in catastrophic injury reports.

Catastrophic athletic injuries, illnesses, and medical conditions are defined as:

1. Fatalities.
2. Permanent disability injuries.
3. Serious injuries (fractured spine/neck or serious head injury) even though the athlete has a full recovery.
4. Temporary or transient paralysis (athlete has no movement for a short time but has a complete recovery).
5. Heat stroke or exertional sickling due to exercise.
6. Sudden cardiac arrest or death in a student-athlete (even if not directly related to athletics).

Enclosed is an explanatory letter from Dr. Kucera and a fact sheet about the study and reporting process. Any fatality or catastrophic athletic injury, illness, or medical condition in any of your member schools should be reported.

If you have any questions about this project or about the NCCSIR, please contact the Director, Dr. Kristen Kucera by email (kkucera@email.unc.edu) or by phone (919-962-6228). Thank you for your continued help and cooperation with these researchers to help minimize risk for all those involved in sports.

Attachments: NCCSIR letter, NCCSIR fact sheet



THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

KRISTEN L. KUCERA, PhD, MSPH, LAT, ATC
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AND DIRECTOR

kkucera@email.unc.edu
O 919-962-6228 | F 919-962-0489

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Department of Exercise and Sport Science
National Center for Catastrophic Sport Injury Research
Fetzer Hall | Room 123 | Campus Box 8700
210 South Road | Chapel Hill, NC 27599-8700
nccsir.unc.edu

Dear State Association Executive Directors and Commissioners:

I am writing to tell you about our efforts to improve catastrophic sports injury reporting and monitoring. The National Center for Catastrophic Sport Injury Research (NCCSIR) has developed a **national centralized reporting site where anyone can report a catastrophic injury or illness event: [sportinjuryreport.org](https://www.sportinjuryreport.org)**. This site is the result of a collaborative effort between NCCSIR and the Consortium for Catastrophic Injury Monitoring in Sport. Enclosed is a fact sheet about the NCCSIR, Consortium and our efforts.

Any fatality or catastrophic event occurring in any of your member schools should be reported as follows.

- 1) *Notify NFHS & NCCSIR about event.* Once notified, NFHS will email a notice of event and reporting packet to the State Association Executive Director.
- 2) *Contact school to complete an initial surveillance report at [sportinjuryreport.org](https://www.sportinjuryreport.org).* The State Association Executive Director forwards the reporting packet to their member school.
- 3) *Member school reports event & provides contact information for athlete and parent.* School representatives will be asked to complete a brief surveillance form about the event. The form will only take about 10 minutes to complete and may be completed online (<https://www.sportinjuryreport.org/>) or by phone (919-843-8357). Schools are also asked to provide contact information for the athlete and their family to NCCSIR.

Once the surveillance report and contact information is received, NCCSIR will send the athlete and their parent information about the study and consent forms to provide additional details about the event. NCCSIR will contact the school for additional information if needed.

If you have any questions about this project or about the NCCSIR please contact the Director Kristen Kucera by email (kkucera@email.unc.edu) or by phone (919-843-8357).

This research study has been approved by the University of North Carolina Institutional Review Board and all information will be confidential and securely stored.

Thank you for your assistance and continued efforts to help make sports safer for all those involved.

Yours sincerely,

Kristen L. Kucera, PhD, ATC
Director, National Center for Catastrophic Sport Injury Research (NCCSIR)

National Center for Catastrophic Sport Injury Research

The **mission** of the **National Center for Catastrophic Sport Injury Research (NCCSIR)** is to conduct surveillance of catastrophic injuries and illnesses related to participation in organized sports in the United States at the professional, collegiate, high school, and youth levels of play.



**National Center for
Catastrophic Sport Injury Research**

The **goal** of the Center is **to improve the prevention, evaluation, management, and rehabilitation of catastrophic sports-related injuries.**

The most common types of fatal events are acute trauma to the head/neck/spine, exertional-related heat events, exertional-related cardiac events, and disruption of cardiac rhythm due to blunt chest impacts (commotio cordis).

National surveillance of catastrophic sports-related injuries conducted by the National Center for Catastrophic Sports Injury Research (NCCSIR) over the last

thirty years has facilitated the introduction of numerous sports safety interventions.

The Consortium for Catastrophic Injury Monitoring in Sport

Was created to develop a stronger national active surveillance program to improve reporting and monitoring of these catastrophic sports injuries.

The Consortium is a partnership between several different institutions and programs. It is divided into three research divisions corresponding to the major types of catastrophic injuries.

Consortia Research Divisions

Exertional Injuries - Douglas Casa, PhD, ATC

- Heat
- Sickling
- Asthma
- Diabetes



Traumatic Injuries - Johna Register-Mihalik, PhD, ATC

- Head
- Spine
- Internal organ
- Lightning



Cardiac Injuries - Jonathan Drezner, MD

- Sudden cardiac arrest
- Sudden cardiac death



Research Partners

- Datalys Center, Inc. and High School RIO—Christine Collins, PhD
- Injury Prevention Research Center, UNC-Chapel Hill—Steve Marshall, PhD
- Lebanon Valley College—Tom Dompier, PhD, ATC

Funding Partners

- American Football Coaches Association (AFCA)
- American Medical Society for Sports Medicine (AMSSM)
- National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA)
- National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)
- National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)
- National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE)

To contact the NCCSIR:

Director: Kristen Kucera, PhD, MSPH, ATC

Medical Director: Robert Cantu, MD

Research Asst: Barbara Goettsch, MSW

Email:

nccsir@unc.edu

Phone: 919-843-8357

Report a
catastrophic sport injury event at:
<https://www.sportinjuryreport.org>