



COACHES CHECKLIST TO IMPROVE LIFESTYLE CHOICES

Addressing lifestyle choices is a necessary responsibility and enforcing code violations can be difficult. However, how you handle education about lifestyle choices and violations will determine your leadership and how the team will respond to your leadership. Always work with your student athlete leaders and have them hold meetings without you to have open discussion and drive home the importance of healthy lifestyle choice for the individual and the team.

- **Send a Message:** At the first practice take time to educate your team about the effects of social drug use, poor nutrition, and improper sleep. Review the code of expectations, reinforce consequences for violation and commitment to uphold the code and hold students accountable. If they do not hear your opinions on these important subjects, your athletes will assume you don't care.
- **Open Discussions:** Make sure lifestyle choices aren't a secret or taboo subject. Encourage open discussions about alcohol and other drugs, nutrition, and sleep among your team members. Let your athletes know you are always accessible to talk with them privately if they want to confide in you. Chemical abuse incidents that have occurred in your schools are relevant and meaningful to your athletes, and they can learn valuable lessons when these issues are discussed in a meaningful manner.
- **Team Ownership:** The team must also make their own deal and discuss lifestyle choices. Have your student athlete leaders hold team only meetings without any adults to come to a team agreement. The student athlete leaders should:
 - ✓ encourage the team to send the message that drug use will not be tolerated and will be confronted, including going to the coach if necessary.
 - ✓ take time to create a plan on how they will support one another to remain drug free. This plan can include hosting substance free parties and having a code word to use to get out of a party where alcohol and drugs are present.
- **Address Party Concerns:** If you overhear about party plans that will involve alcohol or drugs immediately address the problem and explain that the plans are inappropriate and unacceptable for a member of your team. Call a team meeting immediately to confront the behavior of concern. Let the entire group know you are aware of the party and discuss ramifications including the code violation consequences. Make it known that you will enforce the consequences. Have the Student Athlete Leaders hold a meeting immediately afterwards without you to have open discussion and drive home the importance of making healthy lifestyle choices.
- **Send out Reminders:** Weekends are big party times. After Friday games or practices, remind athletes of their commitment to the code. Wins and/or losses can encourage drinking, a message supported by the cultural acceptance of alcohol use for both celebrations and defeats. You must remind athletes of the codes and discourage drinking no matter win or loss. Have the Student Athlete Leaders hold a



- meeting immediately afterwards without you to have open discussion and drive home the importance of making healthy lifestyle choices. **Encourage Substance-Free Parties:** The number one reason students say they use substances is because there is nothing to do. One way to encourage parents, businesses and the community at large to get involved with your athletic program is ask them for their help in providing positive activities to keep the students healthy and safe. Parents can be encouraged to host a substance-free party, businesses can provide discounts for bowling, movies, etc. for student athletes, and faculty may volunteer to supervise an open gym after the game. Involve the team in planning these events.
- **Act on Suspicion:** If you smell alcohol, smoke, or marijuana, confront the athlete immediately. Make sure the athlete knows that you know. If you fail to act, the athlete may assume that this behavior is OK, or that you don't care. Explain and enforce the restorative justice model: educate, correct and restore. Be sure to get the student the help he/she needs.