

**For Immediate Release:**

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## SPORTS SAFETY “FIRE” DRILLS

**MANCHESTER, NH – September 4, 2015:** An athlete collapses unconscious on the field. It’s Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA), the leading cause of death among young athletes. What happens in the next 10 minutes is literally the difference between life and death. Safe Sports Network, a nonprofit program in greater Manchester, is committed shifting the balance toward life.

For years, Safe Sports professionals have been teaching CPR to coaches and athletes and developing emergency response plans for all of their teams. This year, teams are not just *talking* about how to respond to an emergency situation. They are actually holding drills to help them practice their response.



Amy Hollingworth, Director of the Safe Sports Network, describes these “drop the dummy” drills: “Having an AED retrieval team, a CPR/AED team to initiate care and a 911 team to call for help and direct emergency responders to the scene are important steps. Earlier in the season, coaches should have already assigned these emergency roles to their athletes. But creating the plans and response team is only the first step. Doing a practice drill is the best way to test a response team’s readiness. The drills work like this: A manikin is placed on the playing surface and someone shouts, “Someone has collapsed, we need help!” At this moment, the team’s Emergency Action Plan goes into effect. Students and coaches provide care and use an AED training device as if this were a real arrest situation.

After the drill, teams debrief to go over results of the exercise, identifying any areas that need clarification or further exploration. It’s been a very well-received and positive experience. Coaches and teams have really taken this seriously. Everyone is working together to ensure the best care for their teammates,” says Hollingworth.

Eric Gelinas, Safe Sports Athletic Trainer at Bedford High School, comments about the value of these drills, “All of our teams and venues have specific needs and challenges that need to be addressed when it comes to an emergency situation. These drills have helped each team to identify and work through those.”

Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) is a medical condition that causes between 100-150 deaths a year amongst high school athletes. In more than 50% of SCA cases, death is the first sign of a problem. SCA survival is reduced by 10% for every minute of delay in care. Having an AED on premises can help increase chances of survival. However, having an AED onsite without an established and practiced protocol will likely not be of much help to the victim. Safe Sports Network is working with schools, leagues, coaches and athletes at every level to ensure an injured/ill player gets definitive care as quickly as possible. Planning is paramount for a successful outcome when SCA occurs.

To learn more or to find out how you can contribute to ensure that young athletes are as safe as possible, visit [www.nhmi.net](http://www.nhmi.net).

*Started in 1989 with free sports physicals for high school student athletes, Safe Sports Network now provides injury care daily at eight high schools and in its drop-in clinic as well as education for coaches, parents and athletes. Although participation in high school sports is a very important part of social, physical and personal development, it is not without*

*risk. In fact 3.5 million young athletes are treated for sports injuries annually. Without sports medicine professionals on hand, potentially life-threatening conditions, like concussions or heat stroke, may go unrecognized and result in unnecessary death or disability. Safe Sports Network is dedicated to promoting and providing a safe sports environment to young athletes in New Hampshire.*

*Currently, Safe Sports Network provides coverage for several thousand athletes at Manchester Central, Manchester Memorial, Manchester West, Bedford, Goffstown, Bishop Brady, Bishop Guertin and Campbell High Schools. Youth athletes from MRYHA Flames Hockey, Manchester PAL, Hooksett Youth Athletics, Manchester Bears, Bedford Bulldogs, Derry Wolverines and Derry Demons Football also benefit from these free services. A new program this year is bringing sports safety to 8 area middle schools. Further, any youth athlete can take advantage of the Safe Sports free injury drop-in clinic weekday afternoons in Manchester (call 603-627-9728 for more information).*

*NHMI is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to the advancement of knowledge in musculoskeletal care and sports medicine and to promoting and providing a safe sports environment for athletes.*