The How-to Guide to Developing an Eating Disorder Policy

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Sports Medicine Conference
May 20-26, 2007

Setting the Scene...

Mickey is the head athletic trainer at Brian University and after spending the last year working with a woman on his track team who was diagnosed with an eating disorder he decides that his institution needs an eating disorder policy. Mickey decides to call his colleague, Minnie, at Anderson University to see if she has a policy that he can use as his starting point. Mickey reviews this policy and thinks that it looks pretty good so he makes a few tweaks, shows it to his assistant, Daffy who agrees and “Bam” Brian University has a new eating disorder policy.

The scenario examined...

- What are the potential problems with this scenario?
- How would you change this process?
- What is one of the main reasons why polices are not followed?

Why a Discussion about Policy and Procedures?

- In a study conducted in 2000 (Bartz) on a census of over 280 NCAA DI Institutions, with a 75% response rate:
  - 19% of Institutions reported had a policy
  - 28% reported one in progress
  - 50% reported no policy
- Asked those who responded yes to send their policy to me to do a content analysis - received 26 “policies”
  - Policies
  - Procedures
  - Guidelines
  - Protocols
  - Un-named Documents
- Content analysis – what components were addressed?
  - Recognition
  - Prevention
  - Intervention
  - Management

Where do I begin?

1. Establish a Need
2. Identify and Establish a Task Force
3. Review/Identify Materials and Resources
4. Policy Development/Writing
5. Submission of Policy to Admin/Legal Council
6. Implementation
7. Review/Evaluation

Establishing the Need

Prevalence Rates of Eating disorders?

- Clinically diagnosed eating disorders are present in approximately 3-5% of all women (Leon, 1991).
- According to the American Dietetic Association, over 5 milllion Americans suffer from eating disorders (Spear & Stellefson-Meyers, 2001).
- In the collegiate athletic population, prevalence is much higher, with a range of 18% (Gustafson, 1989) to 73% (Guthrie, 1991).

Do Colleges/Universities have a Legal Obligation to address the Issue of Eating Disorders?

- From a risk management perspective, Bickford (1999) investigated the legal duty of college athletic departments to athletes with eating disorders.

Research Relating to NCAA DI Colleges and Eating Disorder Policies:

- Results revealed 45 (19%) of the institutions reported that they do have a written policy, 129 (54%) reported that they do not have a written policy, and 67 (28%) reported that they do not have a written policy, but do have one in progress (Bartz, 2003)
- From the above research it was evident that there was not a clear understanding of what constitutes a policy

Establishing the Task Force

- Who should be included?
  - Athletic Trainer
  - Team Physician
  - Administrator
  - Coach
  - Mental Health Professional (counselor, psychiatrist, psychologist)
  - Nutritionist
  - Local community Eating Disorder Professional

Review/Identify your Resources

- Who/what are your prevention resources?
  - Written materials?
  - Video/DVD?
  - Seminar?
  - Class?
- Your intervention personnel?
  - Athletic Trainer?
  - Coach?
  - Physician?
- Your referral resources?
  - On campus counseling center?
  - Team Physician?
  - Team Nutritionist?
  - Community Eating Disorder Program?
- Your management team?
  - Multi-faceted?

Policy Development

According to Karger (2002) there are four sections to policy development:

(1) the historical background of the policy;

(2) a description of the problem(s) that necessitated the policy;

(3) a description of the policy; and

(4) the policy analysis, which includes policy goals, political feasibility, economic feasibility, and administrative feasibility.

The Components of the Policy

- Prevention
  - Primary – prevent the onset (k-12)
  - Secondary – intervene early in development, objective is to limit the extent of abuse
  - Tertiary – treatment and rehabilitation – preventing relapse
- Identification
  - Education
- Intervention
- Management

Writing your Policy Statement

The Carnival Cruise University (CCU) Athletic Department will:

- (a) provide guidelines to all athletic department personnel for the recognition of individuals with an eating disorder or those who are suspected of having disordered eating and/or unhealthy exercise habits and;

- (b) provide procedures for all athletic department personnel on intervention of these individuals;

- (c) provide a referral system for all athletic department personnel in the event that an athlete is diagnosed with having an eating disorder.

Developing the Processes

- Examples of processes may include:
  - (a) prevention of eating disorders,
  - (b) intervention of individuals suspected of having an eating disorder,
  - (c) management of eating disorders,
  - (d) organization and administration, and
  - (e) education and counseling.

Example of a Prevention Process:

The eating disorder management team, including the physician, athletic trainer, nutritionist, and psychologist, shall work together to provide student athletes, coaches, and support staff with a prevention program appropriate to the collegiate athletic setting. Considerations will be given to the specific dynamics of each athletic team.

Developing the Procedures

Questions to consider when writing your procedures include:

1. Is the role of the support staff addressed?
2. Is the role of the coach addressed?
3. When will training take place?
4. Will follow-up training be required?
5. How will training be delivered?

Procedures for the prevention of eating disorders:

Staff Training

1. At the beginning of each year, in the annual all athletic staff meeting, administrators, coaches, and support staff will review existing policies and be given an opportunity to ask questions.
2. Follow-up training for coaches and support staff will be provided on an as-needed basis as requested by coaches or administrators.

Athlete Training

1. All student athletes will be encouraged to enroll in a 1 credit basic nutrition course upon entering college.
2. On a team-by-team basis athletes will be required to attend a pre-season nutritional seminar.

Putting it all together

- Policy
- Process
- Procedure

Conclusion...the bare minimum

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