

## **Athletic Trainers of Student Athletes:**

We need your help to fight prescription pain medication misuse, addiction, and overdose. Prescription opioid pain medication can be addictive and dangerous.

## **The danger of addiction is closer than you think...**

A growing number of student athletes are becoming addicted to pain medication after being prescribed opioids after an injury. Common opioids include Vicodin, OxyContin, and Percocet. These drugs are similar in makeup to heroin, which is also an opioid.

## **If an athlete is injured, take the necessary precautions.**

- Honestly evaluate the limitations and discomfort of an injury. Pain exists for a reason. Ignoring it or masking it with drugs is not in the athlete's best interest.
- Decisions regarding an athlete's return to competition should be determined by the medical professionals involved with the injured athlete, not the parents, coaching staff, or athlete.
- The health and wellbeing of the athlete is the top priority. It is essential that an injured athlete is given time to heal.

## **Athletic Trainers can make a difference in this crisis.**

- Sports injuries can have an impact on the social and emotional life of a student athlete. Depression, loss of connection to friends, and loss of identity are all risks that injured athletes face. Speak with injured athletes about how they can continue to stay involved with the team, even if they are unable to compete.
- Opioids for pain should be considered only by physicians, and only as a last resort. Consider other approaches to pain management, such as ice, heat, rest, or over-the-counter non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications.
- Unused medication should not be shared. Encourage athletes and parents to properly dispose of medications. You can find a location near you at [ncdoj.gov/rxtakeback](http://ncdoj.gov/rxtakeback).

## WHY THIS MATTERS

It only takes a little to lose a lot.

Males who participate in organized sports are three times more likely to misuse prescribed opioids than non-athletes.

For some, it can take as little as a week to become dependent on prescription pain medications.

People aged 12-49 who become dependent on prescription pain medication were 19 times more likely to have used heroin.

Prescription and street opioids like heroin and fentanyl are causing a record number of overdose deaths – an average of approximately 3 people each day in NC.

Learn more at [ncdoj.gov/opioidresources](http://ncdoj.gov/opioidresources)

