

Sudden Cardiac Arrest - Students in Athletic Activities



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HEA 1040, P.L. 56-2021, which was effective upon passage, April 15, 2021, amended the laws addressing sudden cardiac arrest in student athletes. See IC 20-34-8. The Act adds a definition to the law – applicable student, which means a student who competes in an athletic activity. This definition was added as the Act also amended the definition of athletic activity by adding marching band and other extracurricular activities in which students have an increased risk of sudden cardiac arrest. These other extracurricular activities will be determined by the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) in consultation with organizations that specialize in preventing sudden cardiac arrest.

The law requires the IDOE to send guidelines, information sheets, and forms to every school corporation on the nature and risk of sudden cardiac arrest. School corporations are required to disseminate the materials to its schools for coaches, marching band leaders, applicable students, and their parents to review for educational purposes. The amended law requires the materials distributed by IDOE to include information on the nature and warning signs of sudden cardiac arrest, including the risks associated with continuing to play or practice after experiencing one or more symptoms of sudden cardiac arrest which include fainting, difficulty breathing, chest pains, dizziness, and abnormal racing heart rate and information about electrocardiogram testing including the potential risks, benefits, and evidentiary basis behind the testing. IDOE may distribute the materials electronically to school corporations, but IDOE must post these materials on the IDOE website. See IC 20-34-8-5.

The law requires schools every year before the first practice of an athletic activity to give the materials received to all applicable students and their parents. The applicable students and their parents must sign forms acknowledging the receipt and review of the materials and return the form to the coach, marching band leader, or other official designated by the school. The completed forms are required to be maintained by the coach, marching band leader, or other designated school official. See IC 20-34-8-6.

The Act added a new section to the law requiring the training of coaches, marching band leaders, or leaders of IDOE-designated extracurricular activities on sudden cardiac arrest, which is provided by an entity approved the IDOE. An individual may not coach, lead marching band, or lead an athletic activity until the required training is completed. The provider of the training is required to provide the school with a certificate of completion for every individual who completes the required training course on sudden cardiac arrest. School corporations are required to maintain all certificates of completion. Individuals who complete the training are not personally liable for damages as a result of a sudden cardiac arrest incurred in an athletic activity if the leader acted in good faith and was not grossly negligent or engaged in willful or wanton misconduct.