PREGNANT STUDENT-ATHLETE POLICY

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The UT-Dallas intercollegiate athletics department is committed to the personal health and development of all our members, and to the educational mission of the school. We strive to provide an environment that respects all pregnancy and parenting decisions (for both male and female student-athletes), and urge all participants to work cooperatively toward degree completion. This policy sets forth the protections that should be provided for pregnant and parenting students, including those with pregnancy related conditions. It also prohibits retaliation against any student-athlete who complains about issues related to the enforcement of this Pregnancy Policy. We want to protect every student-athlete’s physical and psychological health, and his/her ability to complete their education.

The American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology states that competitive athletes can remain active during pregnancy. However, the physiologic and morphologic changes of pregnancy may interfere with the ability to engage safely in some forms of physical activity. Thus, each sport will be reviewed individually for its potential risk. Modification of activity as medically indicated will be made, and close supervision will be exercised.

We encourage student-athletes who are pregnant or think they may be pregnant, to inform the head athletic trainer immediately to insure the safety of the student-athlete and unborn child. Student-athletes should be aware of the information below. The head athletic trainer or a staff athletic trainer will review this information with the pregnant student-athlete. This information below pertains to pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, and recovery for as long as is deemed necessary by the supervising physician, director of athletics, and head athletic trainer for the University.

I. Confidentiality, Guidelines, & Statements on Participation
   a. Pregnancy is treated just like any other temporary medical condition and the health, safety, and well-being of the student-athlete and unborn child will remain a priority within the UT-Dallas Department of Intercollegiate Athletics.
   b. While not required, it is strongly recommended that the student-athlete notify the head athletic trainer of a pregnancy as early as possible, regardless of whether the pregnancy will be carried to term or terminated. It is in the student-athlete’s best interest to ensure that proper medical care and/or necessary counseling is being sought.
   c. Confidentiality will be maintained. Notification of the coach(es)/other personnel is the decision of the student-athlete and will only become necessary once it no longer becomes safe for the student-athlete to participate or is limited due to pregnancy.
   d. Counseling (for all involved parties) can be arranged and is strongly encouraged. Please contact the head athletic trainer for options available.
The NCAA permits a one-year extension of the five-year period of eligibility for a female student-athlete for reasons of pregnancy.

Student-athletes should not be forced to terminate a pregnancy because of financial or psychological pressure, or fear of losing team membership status.

Student-athletes will not be judged based on decisions to carry pregnancy to full-term, to terminate pregnancy, or adoption.

The University of Texas at Dallas does not cover medical costs related to pregnancy, childbirth, or termination of pregnancy. However, student-athletes will be provided with information regarding financial assistance or referred to individuals with that information.

II. What to do if you suspect you are pregnant (see flow chart)

a. If a student-athlete suspects she is pregnant, this should be verified as soon as possible by a physician of her choice. She should avoid all medications and x-rays until certain she is not pregnant.

b. If a student-athlete is unsure of a physician to consult with, she may contact the head athletic trainer for options available.

III. What if a student-athlete chooses to participate/compete?

a. For student-athletes who choose to participate/compete during their pregnancy, participation clearance/final exercise parameters will rest with the supervising obstetric physician in consultation with the student-athlete, head coach, attending/head athletic trainer, and athletics director during the first trimester. Contact sports are generally prohibited after the first trimester. Restriction of activity may be deemed medically necessary. Active participation will be discontinued at the end of three (3) months of pregnancy, or as recommended by her supervising obstetric physician. These decisions will be managed case-by-case.

b. Documentation of potential risks and understanding of these risks is required in the form of signed consent. The student-athlete will be educated on the effects of strenuous physical activity and the warning signs indicating the necessity to terminate exercise.

c. If the student-athlete chooses to carry the baby to term, prenatal counseling is strongly encouraged and available at the UT-Dallas Counseling Center or Student Health Center (please contact the athletic training staff for assistance if needed in setting this up).

IV. What if a student-athlete chooses NOT to participate?

a. If a student-athlete chooses to longer remain physically active on a team, other opportunities to remain active with the team in some capacity can be arranged (i.e. - team manager, statistician, etc.). This may be arranged in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the attending obstetrics physician.

b. A student-athlete’s future participation on a team will not be effected by choosing not to participate during the pregnancy.
V. **What happens after the pregnancy?**
   a. After delivery, medical clearance must be granted by the attending obstetrics physician and done in consultation with the director of athletics, UTD team physician, and head athletic trainer.

VI. **What happens if a student-athlete decides to terminate the pregnancy or miscarries?**
   a. Confidentiality will be maintained within disclosure regulations.
   b. Medical documentation must be on file prior to the student-athlete’s resumption of any sports specific activities.
   c. Participation clearance will rest with the supervising physician in consultation with the director of athletics and head athletic trainer.

VII. **Warning Signs to Terminate Exercise While Pregnant:**
    a. Vaginal Bleeding
    b. Shortness of Breath Before Exercise
    c. Dizziness
    d. Headache
    e. Chest Pain
    f. Calf Pain or swelling
    g. Pre-Term Labor
    h. Decreased Fetal Movement
    i. Amniotic Fluid Leakage
    j. Muscle Weakness

VIII. **Athletic Department Staff Responsibilities: (Model Policy from NCAA)**
   a. In order to comply with federal law:
      i. Our athletic department will allow a pregnant or parenting student-athlete (S-A) to fully participate on the team, including team-related activities, unless the S-A’s physician or other medical caregiver certifies that participation is not medically safe.
      ii. Medically necessary absences from team activities due to pregnancy shall be considered excused absences and not used against the S-A.
      iii. No coach or other athletic department personnel shall suggest to any S-A that his or her continued participation on a team will be affected in any way by pregnancy or parental or marital status.
      iv. Our athletic department will not allow a hostile or intimidating environment on the basis of pregnancy or parental status to exist. Acts or statements that are hostile toward pregnancy or parenting, or that shun or shame the S-A because she/he is pregnant or parenting, will not be tolerated. Such conduct prevents an individual from effectively participating in, or denies a person the benefits of, the educational opportunities provided by this institution.
v. Out athletic department or University will not terminate or reduce a S-A’s aid because of the pregnancy, marital or parental status during the term of his/her enrollment in the University.

vi. Students may take a medical pregnancy leave, and at the end of that leave they will be reinstated to the same status they had before the leave.

vii. Student-athletes are encouraged to remain in good standing academically, remain engaged in our athletics department, and are required to meet NCAA eligibility standards. Returning students may be evaluated in the same manner as any other team member to determine their specific position on the team, such as a starter or as a forward.

viii. Our athletic department will not permit the use of any written or verbal contact that requires a S-A to not get pregnant or become a parent as a condition of receiving any financial aid.

ix. Our pregnant and formerly pregnant students who wish to continue to participate in athletics are entitled to medical assistance and rehabilitation provided by the athletic training staff on the same basis as such assistance is provided to S-A with other temporary disabilities.

b. In order to assist our student-athletes:

i. Our athletic department will help the pregnant or parenting student-athlete plan for his or her continued academic progress, in accord with the university’s educational mission.

ii. Our athletic department will help the student-athlete return to sport after pregnancy and during parenting, if the student-athlete so desires.

iii. Our athletic department will assist the student-athlete to access the pregnancy and parenting support resources that are available to all college students.

iv. Our athletic department will publish this Policy in a publicly-available Student-Athlete Handbook, make this Policy available to student-athletes and their families on-line, and provide specific education on this Policy for all student-athletes.

v. Our athletic department, in conjunction with the team physician, the Faculty Athletics Representative, the Senior Woman Administrator, Team Certified Athletic Trainers and others designated by the university President, will regularly review student-athlete pregnancy and parenting cases as they occur to monitor compliance with this Policy.

c. Reporting

i. Our athletic department will not require any student-athlete to reveal pregnancy or parenting status. Our department will work to create an environment that encourages the student-athlete to voluntarily reveal her pregnancy and his or her parenting status, in order for our institution to provide optimal support for physical and mental health with professional healthcare. The coach’s attitude toward pregnancy and parenting can be pivotal in creating such a safe environment.
ii. No athletics department personnel will publicly release personally identifiable health information about pregnancy without written, timely authorization from the student-athlete.

iii. When a student-athlete reveals her pregnancy or parenting status to athletics personnel, they should direct the student-athlete to this Policy. They should reiterate the department’s protection of the student-athlete’s team membership status and financial aid. Athletic personnel should refer the student-athlete to the team physician, to the student-athlete’s personal physician, or to a university-designated representative trained in providing information about pregnancy and parenting support options.

iv. Athletic personnel who suspect that a student-athlete is pregnant may report their concerns to a university-designated representative trained in pregnancy and parenting support options / the head athletic trainer.

v. Teammates of pregnant student-athletes may report their concerns to a university-designated representative trained in pregnancy and parenting support options / the head athletic trainer.

d. Enforcement and Non-Retaliation

i. Any member of the athletics department found to have violated this policy by threatening to withhold or withholding athletics participation or an athletics award, by harassing a student-athlete on the basis of pregnancy or parenting status, or by breaching medical confidentiality, will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including possible discharge or expulsion from the university. The athletic department will also take appropriate remedial action to correct the situation.

ii. Any member of the athletic department who becomes aware of conduct that violates this policy should report the conduct to an appropriate official, such as the Athletic Director, the General Counsel’s office, the Title IX Compliance Officer, the Faculty Athletic Representative, or the Equal Opportunity Officer. The athletic department and university will make every effort to prevent public disclosure of the names of all parties involved, except to the extent necessary to carry out an investigation.

iii. Retaliation is specifically prohibited against anyone who complains about pregnancy or parental status discrimination, even if the person was in error about the lawfulness of the conduct complained about. This athletic department will take steps to prevent any retaliation against the individual who made the complaint.
References:
2. Iowa State University Athletic Training, “Pregnant Student-Athlete Policy”
3. Millersville University Athletic Training, “Recommendation for Pregnant Athletes”
4. NCAA Guidelines for Best Practice Presentation, pp58-70.
5. University of Texas – Arlington Department of Athletics, “Participation of the Pregnant Student-Athlete”
7. University of Texas – San Antonio Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, “Pregnancy Policy”
8. Wright State University, “Model Decision Flow Chart on How to Respond to Pregnancy
Model decision flow chart on how to respond to pregnancy (contributed by Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio).

Student-athlete suspects pregnancy: sexual activity + missed menstrual period

- Pregnancy test confirms
  - 2nd pregnancy test confirms
  - Student-athlete seeks counsel
    - Decision-making team forms: e.g., student-athlete, coach, obstetrician, team physician, athletics director, FAR, family members, psychological counselor, faith counselor
      - Student-athlete elects to carry
        - Decision-making team decides on and monitors length of athletics participation up to/past 14 weeks, develops plan for return to sport and continued academic progress
          - Delivery of baby at 40 weeks
            - Spontaneous abortion (miscarriage) in first 12-20 weeks: 10-15% of normal pregnancies
              - 2-4 weeks post-pregnancy, returns to athletics training
              - 6-8 week postpartum, returns to athletics training
            - 6-8 week postpartum, returns to athletics training
              - Academic progress continues throughout pregnancy
      - Team assists student-athlete to access campus & local pregnancy support resources
        - Return to sport
          - Student-athlete elects to abort
            - Student-athlete begins prenatal care