



U.S. CENTER
MENTAL HEALTH
& SPORT

March 8, 2022

Dear USYS Membership,

With the recent tragic death by suicide of rising soccer star Katie Meyer, a goalkeeper for Stanford University Women's soccer team, and a number of other youth soccer players whose names we may not have heard who have also sadly passed away due to mental health challenges, we know there are questions being asked in youth soccer clubs all around the country; How this could happen to such a standout member of our soccer community?, and What we can do in our own clubs to help athletes, coaches or parents who might be struggling with their own mental health challenges?, among others.

As the official Mental Health and Wellness partner of US Youth Soccer, we at the US Center for Mental Health & Sport (a 501c3 not-for-profit) www.mentalhealthandsport.org want soccer clubs in the United States to know that we are here for you and want to help make a difference in the lives of youth, coaches, officials and parents in your youth sport community. We have established training programs, similar to first aid/CPR except learning about mental health. This training can help your club members learn about the signs and symptoms of suicide, depression, anxiety, and the difficulties that come with injury in a sport setting. We also discuss how to approach the topic with someone who may be experiencing a mental health challenge, what pathways to support you might seek out, and what additional resources are available in your community.

Our approach is to utilize the sport family (coaches, administrators, officials, parents, and peers) to look after one another and break down the stigma that exists about mental health in the sport environment. By engaging in mental health awareness training, it will become easier for all of us to start the conversation, reduce the stigma, support one another, and potentially save a life.

Please feel free to reach out to us for support, join one of our "Supportive Mental Health Conversations for Coaches" virtual sessions (<https://mentalhealthandsport.org/events/>), inquire about training opportunities for your club or team (<https://mentalhealthandsport.org/usc-mhs-presentations/>), or donate to support our growing mental health initiatives that save lives. We are here to serve the USYS membership and if we can save just one life, all our efforts and yours are worthwhile.

Margaret Domka
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