University of Nevada Athletic Department Policy on Pregnant Student Athletes

Date: 6/13/07
Reviewed/revised: 7/22/08

Introduction:

With increasing numbers of women participating in sports, there are more women who become pregnant while playing intercollegiate sports. The purpose of this policy is to develop guidelines to protect the health, confidentiality, scholarship and ability of the pregnant student athlete to participate while also assisting medical providers, coaches and administrators with uniform guidelines that address this issue. This policy was developed with assistance from Elizabeth A. Sorensen, PhD, RN, CNOR Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio, Elizabeth.sorensen@wright.edu

Medical Issues:

Although there are few studies related to intense strenuous physical activity in pregnant student-athletes, there are published guidelines that address this issue. The American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology Committee Opinion January 2002 and the NCAA Guideline 3b Participation by the Pregnant Student Athlete June 2002 offer guidelines for the obstetric and team physicians to use in determining participation. If participation is allowed the student athlete will require close obstetric supervision. Prior to permitting the pregnant student athlete to participate in her intercollegiate sport, the University will form a support team for the student athlete. The team should consist of the obstetrician, team physician, coach, athletic trainer, athletic department representative, and others if necessary. Medical issues related to participation should be discussed and a plan for participation may be created. Participation by the pregnant student athlete will require approval from the obstetrician and the team physician. Following delivery or pregnancy termination, medical clearance is required to ensure the student athlete’s safe return to athletics. See References for additional information for healthcare providers.

Legal and Administrative Issues:

When a pregnant female athlete informs the athletic department of her pregnant status, the department should first advise the student regarding her options within the athletics department and how they relate to her future scholarship status and participation on the team.

The NCAA Division I Manual Rule 14.2.1.3 states:

  Pregnancy Exemption. A member institution may approve a one-year extension of the five-year period of eligibility for a female student-athlete for reasons of pregnancy.

NCAA Bylaw 15.3.4 states:

  “voluntary withdrawal may result in loss of financial aid”. 
Pregnant student athletes should not voluntarily withdraw immediately. They should be counseled on the issues related to pregnancy, participation, eligibility extension and financial aid before making this decision.

The University of Nevada complies with Title IX and does not discriminate on the basis of pregnancy. The Athletic Department will allow a leave of absence for pregnancy as long as medically necessary and will reinstate the athlete to the position held before pregnancy. Pregnancy is treated no differently than any other type of temporary medical condition. The obstetrician and team physician in conjunction with the student athlete determine the length of participation and any activity restrictions. The support team will monitor academic and athletic performance and assist the student athlete with return to competition after the pregnancy if the student athlete chooses.

Female athletes’ right to privacy is the same for pregnancy as it is for any other personal medical information. The student athlete should be assured that her medical information will be kept confidential unless she gives permission to release the information. She will be encouraged to discuss her pregnancy with her coach but the decision to inform a coach about the condition of pregnancy will remain at the discretion of the athlete. If coaches are informed, they should maintain the privacy of the information. Coaches and athletic trainers should not counsel the athlete on pregnancy issues, such as abortion, adoption or parenting. Instead, they should refer the patient to the UNR Student Health Center or to the student athlete’s private physician.

Male student athletes dealing with a partner’s pregnancy will also be referred to counseling and health care providers at the Student Health Center. A support team may be formed to help the male student athlete with pregnancy and related issues of participation and academic progress.

**Informed Consent:**

As recommended by NCAA Guideline 3b Participation by the Pregnant Student-Athlete, documentation outlining the student athlete’s medical condition, potential risks of athletic participation during pregnancy, and the student athlete’s understanding of these risks should be included in the medical record in the form of a signed informed consent.

**Insurance:**

The Athletic Department insurance does not cover pregnancy related care. If the student athlete has the University sponsored supplemental health insurance, this policy does cover pregnancy. The student athlete should contact the Student Health Center Insurance Coordinator for more information. If the student athlete has her own health insurance, she can be followed by a healthcare provider on that insurance plan. If she has no insurance, the student athlete will be referred to the Renown Pregnancy Center (775) 982-5640 for care.
Policy for University of Nevada Student Athlete Handbook

Student Athletes and Pregnancy

If you become pregnant: If you become pregnant while participating on an intercollegiate team at the University of Nevada we want you to know we have a policy designed to help you. First, we encourage you to discuss your pregnancy and related health concerns with your private physician or a physician at the Student Health Center. We also encourage you to tell your athletic trainer and coach as soon as you learn you are pregnant but you are not required to do so. You may also want to inform your partner, family members, religious advisor, personal physician and others close to you. If you have seen a healthcare provider for diagnosis of pregnancy, you should be aware that you are protected by confidentiality and they cannot inform anyone else of your pregnancy without your permission. If athletic trainers and coaches are informed, they will also keep this information confidential unless you give them permission to do otherwise. Pregnancy in a student athlete can be a challenging event and we want to protect your physical and mental health as well as the health of the fetus while you consider your options. We suggest you do not withdraw from your sport before talking to someone as this can result in loss of scholarship.

NCAA Bylaw 15.3.4 states:

“voluntary withdrawal may result in loss of financial aid”.

Pregnancy is considered a temporary medical condition and the NCAA Division I Manual Rule 14.2.1.3 is as follows:

Pregnancy Exemption. A member institution may approve a one-year extension of the five-year period of eligibility for a female student-athlete for reasons of pregnancy.

What happens to your scholarship: If you are pregnant and you inform your athletic trainer and coach and you do not voluntarily withdraw from your sport, your scholarship will remain in place for the remainder of the granting year, July 1-June 30. Your coach can help you discuss your situation with the Athletic Department.

Where to go for help: Your athletic trainer or coach will refer you to counseling and healthcare providers outside the Athletic Department at the Student Health Center. Remember, your athletic trainers and coaches are obligated to keep your pregnancy confidential unless you specifically give them permission to share that information. If you choose not to tell your athletic trainer or coach, below is a list of resources to assist you. You can be seen for pregnancy testing, referral and counseling at the Student Health Center. Healthcare providers there can also help you discuss your pregnancy with your athletic trainer and coach if you choose to do so.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>UNR Student Health Center</th>
<th>(775) 784-6598</th>
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<tr>
<td>UNR Counseling Center</td>
<td>(775) 682-8847</td>
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Can you participate in your sport? If you are pregnant and want to continue to participate in your sport then you, your healthcare provider, the team physician, your coach, your athletic trainer, and the athletic department representative will form a support team to discuss if and how you can safely continue in your sport. Depending on your sport and with your healthcare provider’s approval, you may be able to participate up to the 14th week of your pregnancy. If you choose to participate, you will receive information regarding the risks of athletic participation during pregnancy and your healthcare provider will discuss it with you. When you feel that you understand the issues involved in participating during pregnancy, you will be asked to sign a consent and it will be added to your medical record. Your support team will monitor your health and academic progress during your pregnancy and can assist you in return to your sport if you decide to return.

What about medical insurance coverage? If you have the University of Nevada, Reno sponsored health insurance and become pregnant, this insurance will cover your pregnancy. Contact the insurance coordinator at the Student Health Center (775) 784-6598 for more information. If you are not insured, contact Renown Pregnancy Center (775) 982-5640 for an appointment for prenatal care. The Athletic Department does not pay for pregnancy related costs.

What if you are a male athlete whose partner becomes pregnant? While male student athletes are not affected physically by pregnancy like female student athletes, they can have stress over the pregnancy and worry about their pregnant partner and her fetus. Male student athletes may question whether they are ready for fatherhood and the personal and financial obligations associated with pregnancy. We encourage you to discuss these issues with your partner and healthcare providers at the UNR Student Health Center or UNR Counseling Center.
References:


7. PARmed-X for Pregnancy, Physical Activity Readiness Medical Examination. PARmed-X for Pregnancy is a guideline for health screening prior to participation in a prenatal fitness class or other exercise. Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology: http://www.csep.ca/communities/c574/files/hidden/pdfs/parmed-xpreg.pdf


10. Title IX Regulations 1975 provide that “A recipient shall not discriminate against any student, or exclude any student from its education program or activity, including any class or extracurricular activity, on the basis of such student’s pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy or recovery there from, unless the student requests voluntarily to participate in a separate portion of the program or activity of the recipient.”