

## Safe Stars

Location: Tennessee  
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 Category: **Cutting Edge Practice**

### BACKGROUND

In 2015, more than 34,000 emergency department visits in Tennessee were due to sports-related injuries in children younger than 18 years of age. Nationally, sports are responsible for 2.7 million emergency department visits per year for those  $\leq 19$  years and approximately 3.5 million youth under age 14 years receive medical treatment for a sports-related injury each year. The need to balance the promotion of youth sports participation and physical activity with injury prevention and safety standards led to the development of the Safe Stars initiative in Tennessee—the nation’s first program targeting the need for safety standards in youth sports.

### PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) and the Program for Injury Prevention in Youth Sports (PIPYS) at the Monroe Carell Jr. Children’s Hospital at Vanderbilt implemented the first youth sports safety rating system. Safe Stars consists of three levels - Gold Star, Silver Star and Bronze Star. Each level has criteria determined by a team of health professionals. The program is voluntary and free of charge. Safe Stars has three goals: 1) recognizes youth sports leagues that adhere to high standards of safety; 2) Helps leagues implement policies on various safety topics, such as concussion education, injury prevention and weather safety; 3) Provides resources and opportunities for every youth sports league to enhance their safety standards.

### TARGET POPULATION SERVED

This project targets children and adolescents participating in youth sports.

### PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

TDH created an application for leagues to apply for the Safe Stars designation. Applications are reviewed by TDH staff to determine if the league meets the minimum criteria.

| TITLE /MCH BLOCK GRANT MEASURES ADDRESSED   |
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| Rate of hospitalization for non-fatal injury per 100,000 children ages 0 through 9 and adolescents ages 10 through 19 |

Leagues must meet all of the following criteria to qualify for bronze:

- Automated external defibrillator (AED) on site for all games and practices
- Emergency action plan
- Background checks completed on all coaches
- Minimum of 2 coaches CPR/AED certified
- All coaches trained in Sudden Cardiac Arrest recognition/management
- All coaches trained in Concussion recognition/management
- Severe weather policy
- Anaphylaxis and allergy emergency plan
- Safeguarding policy in place

To qualify for Silver/Gold, leagues must meet all of the above plus 2 criteria below to meet silver and 4 or more to meet gold:

- All athletic equipment undergoes safety checks
- All coaches complete additional health, safety and injury prevention training
- All coaches CPR/AED certified
- Implement tobacco free policy such as “Young Lungs at Play”
- Medical professional on site for all games
- Medical professional on site for all practices
- Pre-participation physical examinations required for all athletes
- Promote positive culture and standard of expectations concerning behavior
- Provide risk and safety information/policies to parents and guardians

Once leagues meet all of the criteria for the Safe Stars designation they are provided a certificate signed by the TDH Health Commissioner. In addition, they are provided a Safe Stars graphic to display on materials to show they are a

Safe Stars league. The name of each Safe Stars league is posted on the TDH website.

### PROGRAM OUTCOMES/EVALUATION DATA

Data will be collected from the Safe Stars applications to determine the number of leagues meeting each level of Safe Stars. A survey has been created to determine the number of leagues that implemented new policies to meet criteria and which policies were implemented. The survey will be filled out before leagues receive their certificates. Data will be utilized from emergency department, hospital discharge data and death data to determine the long term outcomes.

### PROGRAM COST

Staff time was contributed by the TDH injury Prevention staff. The staff time has been utilized to develop the application, review submissions and award the Safe Stars recognition to leagues meeting the established criteria. The total cost spent on materials for this project is \$16000 to print brochures and certificates along with purchasing automated external defibrillators (AEDs). The materials were funded by two Centers for Disease Control grants including the Core State Injury and Violence Prevention Grant and the Sudden Death in the Young Grant.

### ASSETS & CHALLENGES

Assets: This project has over 40 partner agencies including professional and collegiate sports teams. A full list of partners can be accessed at:

<https://www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/fhw/vipp/safe-stars-initiative.html#partners>

Challenges: The policies and activities required for leagues to achieve Safe Stars recognition were determined by evidence-based practices utilized to prevent injuries. Leagues often do not have these minimum policies in place. Another challenge was the cost of AED's.

Overcoming Challenges: TDH has created sample policy templates for leagues to utilize in developing the required safety policies. In addition, TDH has secured grant funding to purchase AEDs for leagues that meet all other criteria except for having an AED on site for practices and games.

### LESSONS LEARNED

Lessons learned include understanding the importance of engaging with sports leagues during the pilot phase to ensure the criteria can be met. For example, because AEDs are expensive, the requirement to obtain one has been the one criterion the leagues often cannot meet, thus preventing leagues from applying for the Safe Stars designation. A

second lesson was in understanding the need to make templates available for leagues to utilize in creating new policies. Initially, examples of policies were provided but templates were not. Making the policy creation process as simple as possible is critical to league participation in the program. One challenge that has been identified has been the difficulty in promoting the Safe Stars initiative to community youth sports leagues. There is not one central agency that oversees all youth sports leagues; therefore, reaching all of them is a challenge as they must be contacted individually.

### FUTURE STEPS

To date, four leagues have achieved Gold Status. The main goal is to increase the number of leagues meeting the Safe Stars minimum criteria. Future steps include a partner meeting to determine specific activities each of the partner organizations can do to assist with leagues meeting the Safe Stars criteria and therefore increasing the number of leagues applying for Safe Stars recognition.

### COLLABORATIONS

This project was a collaboration between the Program for Injury Prevention in Youth Sports (PIPYS) and the Tennessee Department of Health. In addition, multiple statewide agencies, professional sports teams and collegiate teams have agreed to partner to promote and support this program.

### PEER REVIEW & REPLICATION

N/A

### RESOURCES PROVIDED

All of the resources can be found on the project website: <https://www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/fhw/vipp/safe-stars-initiative.html#sample>

These include:

- Sample policies
- Brochures for leagues and families
- Application for an AED
- Resources to achieve Safe Stars standards

**Key words: youth sports, injury prevention, safety rating**

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