



NATIONAL BOARD FOR
CERTIFIED COUNSELORS®

Understanding the Role of a Sports Counselor: Why They Matter for Athletes



June 2025

White Paper

Understanding the Role of a Sports Counselor: Why They Matter for Athletes

In the high-stakes arena of professional and amateur sports, athletes confront challenges that extend far beyond physical demands. They face significant mental, emotional, and psychological obstacles that can profoundly affect both their performance and overall well-being. This is where the expertise of a sports counselor becomes essential. These specialized professionals are uniquely equipped to support athletes at every level, guiding them through the intricate landscape of sports counseling, personal development, and external pressures, including governmental policies. Their role is crucial in empowering athletes to overcome these hurdles and reach their full potential.

History and Definition of Sports Counseling

Over the past two decades, significant efforts have been dedicated to sports counseling, a field that has evolved from the broader domains of counseling and psychology. Sports counseling addresses the diverse developmental needs and concerns of youth, adolescents, young adults, and adult athletes who may require professional assistance. The literature in this field has increasingly highlighted the counseling needs of athletes, with most articles focusing on college athletes. In contrast, others delve into youth sports programs, high school athletes, professional athletes, and recreational or leisure athletes, showcasing the wide range of needs within the population. As a result, sports counseling has emerged as a specialization within the domains of counseling and psychology. In this manuscript, the terms “sports counseling” and “athletic counseling” are used interchangeably to describe this burgeoning field.

It was not until 1985 that competencies for athletic counselors were first outlined in the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision’s project “Counselors of Tomorrow” (Nejedlo et al., 1985). The project aimed to develop a visionary model for future counselor educators, supervisors, and counselors to “ensure that we were not only maintaining pace with society’s development but also anticipating the probable changing needs of our clientele in a society characterized by change” (p. iv).



Athletic counseling (or sports counseling) is defined as a proactive and growth-oriented process that seeks to assist individuals in maximizing their personal, academic, and athletic potential. This approach incorporates principles from counseling, career development, movement science, psychology, and human development (Cole & Tinsley, 2009; Nejedlo et al., 1985).

While both sports counseling and sports psychology cater to the developmental needs of athletes and their athletic performance, they differ in their primary focus. Sports counseling stands out for its emphasis on an athlete’s psychoemotional needs and challenges, as well as their overall personal and clinical development. In contrast, sports psychology is primarily concerned with aspects related to an athlete’s performance.

What Is a Sports Counselor?

A sports counselor is a highly trained mental health professional dedicated to addressing the unique needs of athletes. They typically hold advanced degrees, such as a master's or doctorate in counseling or a related field, along with specific certifications and credentials in sports counseling. These professionals provide essential support in mental, emotional, and psychological aspects that significantly impact athletes' performance and overall well-being. The role encompasses licensed professional counselors, clinical mental health counselors, practicing counselors, counselors-in-training, educators, and other helping professionals specializing in this critical field.



Sports counselors focus on four core areas: Foundations of Sports Counseling, Contextual Dimensions of Sports Counseling, Knowledge and Skills for the Practice of Sports Counseling, and Athlete Mental Health. Their training combines traditional mental health practices with a deep understanding of athletic performance, sports culture, and the unique pressures athletes face. With this comprehensive preparation, sports counselors are well-equipped to assist youth, adolescents, young adults, and adult athletes across diverse settings, promoting a more inclusive and informed approach within both the counseling and athletic professions. Their work has a profound impact on the well-being of athletes, underscoring the importance of their role in supporting this population.

Why Is the Role of a Sports Counselor Important?



Sports counselors are important, as they play a crucial role in addressing the mental, emotional, and psychological challenges faced by athletes. These professionals provide a safe space for athletes to confront issues such as performance anxiety, stress, depression, injury recovery, and life transitions. By understanding the unique pressures that accompany athletic performance—including public scrutiny, identity conflicts, and the

transition out of competitive sports—sports counselors offer specialized support tailored to the diverse needs of athletes, promoting mental health and resilience.

They assist athletes in developing essential skills, such as mental resilience, focus, and motivation, which significantly contribute to improved athletic performance and longevity in their sports careers. More than that, sports counselors play a vital role in promoting overall mental health by helping athletes cope with stressors, manage interpersonal relationships, and navigate career transitions. Their training includes extending principles of multicultural counseling to the athlete population, ensuring that they can effectively respond to the various cultural dynamics present in sports.

By addressing the psychoemotional needs of athletes, sports counselors facilitate both personal and athletic development, supporting athletes in achieving their goals while fostering a holistic approach to their well-being. This holistic approach is the cornerstone of sports counseling, as it

recognizes that an athlete's mental health is as important as their physical prowess. Ultimately, the significance of sports counselors lies in their ability to enhance the mental health and performance of athletes while navigating the broader cultural and developmental challenges they encounter throughout their careers.

Benefits to Athletes

The benefits of a sports counselor to athletes are numerous and impactful, regardless of whether they are elite professionals, college athletes, or youth sports participants. One of the primary advantages is the enhancement of mental resilience, as sports counselors help athletes manage pressure and setbacks effectively. This support is crucial for maintaining peak performance during competitions.

Additionally, sports counselors provide essential support for injury recovery by offering psychological aid during physical rehabilitation. They help athletes cope with the emotional challenges that often accompany injuries, fostering a more positive recovery experience. This comprehensive support system ensures athletes feel secure in their recovery journey. Counselors also play a vital role in life skills development, assisting athletes with time management, goal setting, and balancing their sports commitments with their personal lives.



Furthermore, sports counselors equip athletes with coping strategies to manage stress, anxiety, and various mental health issues. This guidance enables athletes to navigate the pressures of competition, media scrutiny, and public expectations with greater ease. Transition support, which involves helping athletes adjust to significant changes in their athletic careers, is another critical benefit. For example, sports counselors guide athletes through career changes or retirement, helping them adjust to new roles and challenges.

By addressing both personal and athletic issues, sports counselors promote the overall development of athletes. They foster improved relationships with teammates, coaches, and family members, enhancing communication and understanding within these dynamics. This emphasis on connection makes athletes feel more supported and part of a team. Moreover, sports counselors are trained to understand the unique cultural dynamics within the athlete population, allowing them to provide tailored support that respects and acknowledges the diverse backgrounds of athletes.

Overall, sports counselors play a vital role in supporting athletes' mental health and performance, contributing to their success both on and off the field while ensuring they develop the necessary skills to thrive throughout their athletic careers and beyond.

Challenges Athletes Face Linked to Government and Policy Issues

Athletes today face considerable challenges stemming from government and policy issues that profoundly affect their careers and well-being. The evolving landscape in college athletics, particularly regarding fair compensation, highlights these complexities.

Recent developments, such as the new *House* settlement, aim to address athlete compensation, particularly for those at schools participating in the unregulated Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) market (Hewlett & Visser, 2025; Reid & Smalley, 2025; Salamone, 2025). However, concerns about fairness and consistency arise, as these compensation structures may create disparities among institutions, hindering some athletes' ability to compete fairly and secure sponsorships. Key challenges involve navigating complex regulations related to drug testing, eligibility, and compensation, which the vagueness of NIL agreements further complicates. Compliance with anti-doping laws is crucial, as infractions can result in severe penalties. Additionally, government policies often dictate funding, particularly for less popular sports, creating barriers to training and participation. Political influences add instability to training environments, while debates around transgender athlete participation complicate the landscape. Moreover, geopolitical issues may limit opportunities for international competition, affecting athletes' growth. Many often overlook the lack of adequate mental health resources, leaving athletes without essential support. Inadequate retirement and transition policies further complicate life planning after a career in sports. Collectively, these challenges underscore the urgent need for reforms that promote fairness, equity, and support in athletics.



How Counselors Help Athletes Navigate These Challenges

Sports counselors play a vital role in helping athletes navigate the numerous challenges they encounter in their careers and personal lives, particularly in understanding and adapting to external pressures. They provide essential mental health support, offering a safe space for athletes to discuss concerns such as anxiety, depression, and stress related to competition. Through coping strategies and therapeutic techniques, sports counselors assist athletes in managing their emotions and maintaining their mental well-being. Additionally, they educate athletes about complex regulations related to drug testing, eligibility, and compensation, ensuring they understand their rights and responsibilities. Counselors advocate for fair treatment and guide athletes through transitions, such as moving from high school to college athletics or retiring from competitive sports, helping them adjust to new environments and cope with changes to their identity. For athletes of all ages, from youth sports to seasoned professionals, sports counselors help explore career options beyond sports, guiding them in identifying their interests and skills while providing resources for educational opportunities and job placement after their athletic careers. In conflict situations, sports counselors provide mediation and communication strategies to resolve disputes with coaches and teammates. They also teach resilience and coping skills to help athletes handle setbacks and performance pressures. By promoting healthy lifestyle choices and offering comprehensive support, sports counselors empower athletes to thrive both personally and professionally, ensuring that external issues do not hinder their goals or compromise their mental health.

Publications, Research, and Organizations You Should Know

The AthLife Foundation. (n.d.). An industry leader in student-athlete development.

<https://athlifefoundation.org>

Cole, K. W., & Tinsley, T. M. (2009). Sports counseling. In American Counseling Association (Ed.), *The ACA encyclopedia of counseling* (pp. 522–524). American Counseling Association.

Di Fronso, S., & Budnik-Przybylska, D. (2023). Sport psychology interventions for athletes' performance and well being. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(4), 3712. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20043712>

Foltz-Emmons, S., & Lauer, L. (n.d.). *Tennis and mental health: Parents' questions answered*. USTA National. <https://www.usta.com/en/home/improve/tennis-health---fitness/national/answering-parents--questions--tennis-and-mental-health.html#accordion-3e02b021df-item-a4c8489fa1>

Fullagar, H. H. K., McCall, A., Impellizzeri, F. M., Favero, T., & Coutts, A. J. (2019). The translation of sport science research to the field: A current opinion and overview on the perceptions of practitioners, researchers and coaches. *Sports Medicine*, 49, 1817–1824. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40279-019-01139-0>

Hewlett, R. T., & Visser, J. E. (2025, June 11). NCAA NIL settlement reshapes college athletics and athlete payments. *The National Law Review*, 25(169). <https://natlawreview.com/article/ncaa-nil-settlement-reshapes-college-athletics-and-athlete-payments>

IOC Mental Health Working Group. (2020). *The International Olympic Committee Sport Mental Health Recognition Tool*. <https://www.olympics.com/athlete365/app/uploads/2021/06/BJSM-SMHAT-1-Athlete365-2020-102411.pdf>

Kerulis, M. (2023). *Mental health for athletes: An essential guide*. <https://www.drmichelekerulis.com/post/mental-health-for-athletes-an-essential-guide>

NCAA & Sport Science Institute. (2024). *Mental health best practices: Understanding and supporting student athlete mental health* (2nd ed.). https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/ssi/mental/SSI_MentalHealthBestPractices.pdf

Nejedlo, R. J., Arrendondo, P., & Benjamin, L. (1985). *Imagine: A visionary model for the counselors of tomorrow*. George's Printing.

Niehoff, K. (2025). *Mental wellness of participants in high school activities remains top priority*. National Federation of State High School Associations. <https://www.nfhs.org/articles/mental-wellness-of-participants-in-high-school-activities-remains-top-priority>

Reid, A. & Smalley, A. (2025, June). What the NCAA settlement means for colleges and state legislatures. *National Conference of State Legislatures* [NCSL]. <https://www.ncsl.org/state-legislatures-news/details/what-the-ncaa-settlement-means-for-colleges-and-state-legislatures>

Salamone, M. (2025). The House built by fire: How litigation has sparked impending changes to NCAA. *Florida Entertainment and Sports Law Review*, 4(1), Article 4. <https://scholarship.law.ufl.edu/feslr/vol4/iss1/4>

Schorro, N., Gut, V., Conzelmann, A., & Schmid, J. (2022). Effectiveness of individual exercise and sport counseling based on motives and goals: A randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Exercise and Sport Psychology*, 44(2), 103–115. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsep.2021-0018>

Tinsley, T. (2005). *The self-reported multicultural sports counseling competencies among professional school counselors and Play It Smart academic coaches* [Doctoral dissertation, Duquesne University]. <https://dsc.duq.edu/etd/1286>

Wynn, J. (2025). Addressing the mental health struggles of student-athletes. *Minding the Campus*. <https://www.mindingthecampus.org/2025/01/13/addressing-the-mental-health-struggles-of-student-athletes>

Interview Questions With Taunya Marie Tinsley

PhD, DMin, NCC, ACS, LPC, LPCC, Director of Certification and Credentialing Services, National Board for Certified Counselors, Inc. and Affiliates

Dr. Taunya Marie Tinsley owns Transitions Counseling Service LLC and Life Skills Program, where she provides a wide range of counseling services, coaching, consultation, and leadership development training. She also serves as the Clinical Director of the Mount Ararat Baptist Church Counseling Center in Pittsburgh, PA. With certifications as a National Certified Counselor (NCC), Licensed Professional Counselor (PA & NJ), and Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (OH), Dr. Tinsley brings a wealth of experience and expertise to her practice.



With over 30 years of experience, Dr. Tinsley has cultivated a diverse professional background in clinical counseling, higher education, athletic administration, and culturally relevant ministries. She has mentored and coached professionals in the sports and corporate industries, drawing from her experiences as a former student athlete, sports coach, and athletic administrator. Her ability to excel in high-pressure environments is evident from her work with high school and professional athletes, coaches, athletic administrators, business executives, and leaders. Dr. Tinsley's various experiences throughout her career have led her to her current role as the Director of Certification and Credentialing Services at the National Board for Certified Counselors, Inc. and Affiliates (NBCC).

Dr. Tinsley has held esteemed positions at renowned institutions, including serving as an Associate Professor and Program Coordinator for the Sports Counseling Certificate Program at California University of Pennsylvania. She has also held leadership roles at Waynesburg University, Missio Seminary, Villanova University, and Lincoln University of Pennsylvania. In addition to her professional commitments, Dr. Tinsley actively advocates for organizations and professionals in the counseling field. She has held positions such as the North Atlantic Regional Representative and President of the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD), President of the Pennsylvania College Counseling Association, and President of the Pennsylvania Counseling Association. Her collaboration with the American Counseling Association in developing the Sports Counseling Interest Network and the Anti-racism Commission and her leadership roles in other counseling associations highlight her dedication to making a positive impact.

Dr. Tinsley has an impressive educational background, earning a BA in business administration from Augsburg College, where she was inducted into the Athletic Hall of Fame. She also obtained an MA in higher education administration and college student development from the University of Iowa and a PhD in counselor education and supervision from Duquesne University. Her outstanding academic and leadership achievements have led to her induction as a post-doctoral member into the Yale Graduate School Chapter of the National Bouchet Graduate Honor Society. Dr. Tinsley also holds a Certificate in Missional Theology from Biblical Theological Seminary (now Missio Seminary) and a Doctor of Ministry from United Theological Seminary.

Dr. Tinsley's extensive expertise, dedication to her clients, and commitment to professional growth and community advocacy have established her as a highly respected and influential figure in counseling and beyond.

Job Function and Daily Responsibilities:

Can you describe your typical day as a licensed professional counselor with a specialization in sports counseling?

First, it is important to know that sports counselors are integral to the holistic development and well-being of athletes. They provide essential mental health support, help navigate external challenges like government policies and ultimately contribute to athletes' success both on and off the field. As the sports landscape continues to evolve, the role of these counselors becomes even more vital in ensuring athletes thrive amidst increasing pressures and complexities.



In my private practice, I work with athletes across all stages of life, from high school to college and professional levels, providing individual, couples, and family counseling. Additionally, I serve as a consultant for the AthLife Foundation, collaborating with high school student athletes, academic athletic coaches, and student athlete development support staff to implement programming focused on positive youth development. This collaborative approach ensures that all voices are heard and considered in the process, making everyone involved feel included and valued. My work is dynamic and varies significantly based on the context and population I am working with. For instance, the needs of a high school athlete preparing for college differ considerably from those of a professional athlete managing the pressures of competition or retirement.

Furthermore, I facilitate the Multicultural Sports Counseling Advanced Training Program, a unique initiative designed for counselors and educators. This program equips professionals who work with athletes in diverse environments, including youth sports programs, schools, universities, community agencies, professional sports organizations, and recreational facilities, with the necessary skills and knowledge to support their clients effectively. By participating in this program, counselors can deepen their understanding of the unique challenges athletes face in various cultural contexts and learn how to provide the most effective support.

Moreover, my work involves cultivating culturally competent church leaders, including scholars, academics, coaches, athletic directors, pastors, sports ministers, and other professionals, to ensure effective ministering to the holistic development of the athlete population and the broader sports community. I offer insights into the intersection of sports, culture, and ministry, fostering an environment that promotes learning and collaboration. Through these initiatives, I aim to foster holistic support for athletes, promoting their mental well-being and personal growth in various contexts, thereby enhancing their overall performance and well-being. My approach is not just relevant but also practical, tailored to meet the unique challenges faced by each individual or group I engage with.

What types of issues do you most frequently work with athletes on?

Identity development; retirement/transitions from sports; marriage, family, and relationships; depression; anxiety; grief and loss; and existential issues.

Challenges Faced:

What are some of the biggest challenges athletes face today, both psychologically and due to external factors like government policies?

Athletes today face significant psychological challenges, including performance anxiety, depression, and the pressure to maintain peak performance levels. College athletes face external factors such as the complexities of government policies regarding drug testing and eligibility. The introduction of Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) regulations adds pressure as athletes navigate the financial implications of endorsements while managing their academic responsibilities. Additionally, the transfer portal allows for greater mobility, but it can also create uncertainty and stress. These pressures, combined with the impact of social media, make it essential for athletes to receive comprehensive support to thrive both mentally and emotionally.

How do you help athletes cope with these external pressures?



To help athletes cope with external pressures, I employ an existential, humanistic, and person-centered philosophy, utilizing holistic and empirically based counseling approaches. Recognizing that athletes, like many cultural groups, face complex demands, stressors, and challenges, I integrate diverse therapeutic interventions tailored to their unique needs. I ensure that my practice includes specialized knowledge and skills beyond the basic counselor preparation. I utilize foundational techniques such as metacognition strategies and broaching to foster open communication and understanding. By applying multicultural

techniques, including cross-cultural communication, I create a supportive environment where athletes can express their concerns and develop coping strategies. Additionally, I leverage the framework for positive youth development, focusing on enhancing their mental well-being and personal growth. Through these methods, I aim to empower athletes to navigate their challenges effectively, promoting resilience and overall well-being.

Credentials and Qualifications:

What educational background and certifications are required to specialize in sports counseling?

To specialize in sports counseling, a strong educational background and relevant certifications are essential. A sports counselor is a highly trained mental health professional dedicated to addressing the unique needs of athletes. They typically hold advanced degrees, such as a master's or doctorate in counseling or a related field, along with specific certifications and credentials in sports counseling. Additionally, prior experience working with athlete populations is crucial, as it provides practical insights into the challenges and dynamics athletes face. In some cases, a relevant combination of education and work experience may also be acceptable, ensuring that the counselor is well-equipped to support athletes effectively.

How do you stay current with developments in sports counseling and mental health?

I stay current with developments in sports counseling and mental health through a multifaceted approach. First, I regularly attend conferences and workshops that focus on the latest research and best practices in the field, allowing me to learn from leading experts and engage in discussions with fellow professionals. I also prioritize continuing education by enrolling in relevant courses and certification programs that deepen my knowledge and skills. Networking with colleagues and professionals in the field is essential, as it provides opportunities to share insights and collaborate on emerging trends and developments. Additionally, I conduct research to stay informed about new findings and methodologies, ensuring that my practice remains evidence-based and effective in addressing the needs of athletes.

Impact of Government Policies:

What role can sports counselors play in advocating for fair policies that support athletes?



Sports counselors can play a crucial role in advocating for fair policies that support athletes. They do this by serving as informed advocates who understand both the mental health needs of athletes and the complexities of the sports industry. They can educate stakeholders, including coaches, athletic directors, and policymakers, about the psychological impacts of various policies on athletes' well-being. By leveraging their expertise in mental health, sports counselors can highlight the importance of creating environments that prioritize athlete welfare, including mental health support, fair treatment in areas such as the transfer portal and NIL policies, and equitable access to resources.

They can also facilitate discussions with athletes to empower them to voice their concerns and experiences, ensuring that their perspectives are considered in policymaking processes. Additionally, sports counselors can engage in research that examines the effects of existing policies on athlete mental health and performance, providing evidence-based recommendations for improvement. This evidence-based approach ensures that the proposed changes are effective and beneficial for all athletes. By collaborating with professional organizations and advocacy groups, sports counselors can work toward creating systemic change that fosters a more supportive and equitable landscape for all athletes.

Challenges Specific to Your Practice:

What has been your most challenging case you've worked on?

Death by suicide of an athlete.

How do you balance the mental health needs of the athlete with their career ambitions?

Balancing the mental health needs of athletes with their career ambitions requires a nuanced approach that prioritizes both aspects equally. I begin by fostering open communication and



encouraging athletes to express their goals, aspirations, and any mental health challenges they may be facing. This dialogue helps me understand their circumstances and the pressures they encounter. I utilize a person-centered philosophy, focusing on the whole athlete rather than just their performance. By employing holistic and empirically based counseling techniques, I help athletes cultivate self-awareness and resilience, equipping them with the tools to manage stress and navigate their ambitions effectively. I emphasize the importance of mental well-being as a foundational element for achieving career success. By integrating techniques that promote positive youth and adult development and mental health, I ensure that athletes recognize that taking care of their mental health is not a hindrance to their ambitions but rather a vital component of sustainable performance. This balance allows them to pursue their career goals while maintaining their psychological health, ultimately leading to more fulfilling and successful athletic careers with long-term benefits.

Advice for Aspiring Sports Counselors:

What advice would you give to someone interested in pursuing a career in sports counseling?

If you are interested in pursuing a career in sports counseling, my advice is to focus on developing a strong foundation in cultural competence, particularly in multicultural sports counseling. It is essential to gain specialized knowledge and skills that extend beyond basic counselor training. Be aware of biases, misconceptions, and prejudices that can affect the athlete population. Additionally, familiarize yourself with the developmental and cultural competencies necessary for addressing cultural differences. These competencies will help you assist athletes and coaches in recognizing the strengths that arise from their unique backgrounds and experiences. I recommend exploring resources like the Multicultural Sports Counseling Inventory, which can help you build the competencies needed to work effectively with athletes (Tinsley, 2005). Remember that maintaining a positive counseling relationship is crucial, not only as a professional requirement but also as a key factor in enhancing athletes' mental well-being and performance. Embrace the journey of learning and growing in this rewarding field!



What qualities are essential for success in this field?

In sports counseling, the establishment of a strong working alliance is crucial. This alliance, in which both the therapist and athlete actively participate in the therapeutic process with shared objectives, is a key factor for success. It sets the stage for a genuine interpersonal connection, fostering trust and understanding. Empathy and hopefulness are crucial for athletes to feel understood and for setting high expectations for their growth. A person-centered approach, characterized by unconditional positive regard and genuineness, creates a safe space for open and honest communication. Flexibility is key for adapting to the unique needs of each athlete. However, a mentorship mindset is what truly enhances the counseling experience. Lastly, being open to feedback is essential for both personal and professional development, enabling sports counselors to improve their effectiveness in supporting athletes.

Sports Minister:

What are your thoughts on the United States being one of the few countries that do not have an official Sports Minister position in government?

Unlike many countries that have dedicated representatives to oversee sports policy, development, and funding, the United States relies on a decentralized system in which various organizations, both public and private, manage different facets of sports. While this fosters innovation and enables a wide range of programs and initiatives, it may also create inconsistencies in how sports are supported at different levels, from grassroots to elite competition. Without a centralized figure to advocate for athletes' interests, address issues like access and equity, and promote comprehensive sports policies, it can be challenging to implement cohesive strategies that benefit the entire sports community. However, the introduction of a Sports Minister could significantly enhance the focus on critical areas, such as athlete mental health, youth development, and promoting physical activity among the general population. It could also serve as a platform for advocating policies that support athlete welfare and integrate sports into educational curricula. Most importantly, it could be a powerful force in promoting equity in sports, inspiring and motivating the audience with the potential for positive change.

Research and Publications:

What are some of the research and publications you would recommend counselors review if interested in this field?

In addition to those listed above, I would recommend the following:

- Hebard, S. P., & Lamberson, K. A. (2017). Enhancing the sport counseling specialty: A call for a unified identity. *The Professional Counselor*, 7(4), 375–384. <https://doi.org/10.15241/sph.7.4.375>
- Kroshus, E., Coakley, S., Conway, D., Chew, K., Blair, N., Mohler, J. M., Wagner, J., & Hainline, B. (2022). Addressing mental health needs of NCAA student-athletes of colour: Foundational concepts from the NCAA Summit on Diverse Student-Athlete Mental Health and Well-Being. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 57, 137–145. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bjsports-2022-105891>
- Loughran, M. J. (Ed.) (2019). *Counseling and psychological services for college student athletes* (2nd ed.). FIT Publishing.
- Miller, G. M., & Wooten, H. R., Jr. (1995). Sports counseling: A new counseling specialty area. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 74(2), 172–173. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.1995.tb01845.x>
- Petitpas, A. J., & Tinsley, T. M. (2014). Counseling interventions in applied sport psychology. In J. L. Van Raalte & B. W. Brewer (Eds.), *Exploring sport and exercise psychology* (3rd ed., pp. 241–259). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/14251-011>
- Purcell, R., Gwyther, K., & Rice, S. M. (2019). Mental health in elite athletes: Increased awareness requires an early intervention framework to respond to athlete needs. *Sports Med – Open*, 5, 46. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40798-019-0220-1>
- Tinsley, T. M., & Ellis, M. D. (2024). Sport counseling techniques. In S. K. Butler & A. Shillingford (Eds.), *Intersectional counseling skills: The journey to becoming a culturally inclusive counselor* (pp. 243–260). Cognella.

What research is needed to support the sports counseling profession that could help government officials make productive decisions that support athletes' well-being especially in amateur sports?

To support the sports counseling profession and inform government decisions that enhance athlete well-being, several research areas are crucial. Studies should assess the impact of sports counseling on mental health and performance, explore culturally competent practices, and identify barriers to accessing counseling services. Longitudinal research tracking athletes' mental health outcomes and effective integration of counseling in sports programs is essential. Additionally, evaluating training programs for counselors and conducting cost-benefit analyses can provide compelling evidence for investing in these services, ultimately advocating for policies that prioritize the mental well-being of amateur athletes.

