

NJSIAA STEROID TESTING POLICY

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

On June 7, 2006, New Jersey became the first state in the nation to require steroid testing for high school athletes. The testing policy was developed by the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA), a private, nonprofit association of public, parochial and private high schools that organizes high school sports in New Jersey. These frequently asked questions address common questions and concerns about the policy.

1. *How did the NJSIAA's steroid testing policy come about?*

In 2005, then-Governor Richard Cody convened a Governor's Task Force on Steroid Use and Prevention. The task force was chaired by Monsignor Michael E. Kelly, Headmaster of Seton Hall Preparatory School, and included physicians, attorneys, school administrators, coaches and athletic trainers. The task force reported the following: "According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, 3.4% of high school seniors have used anabolic steroids at least once, and 1.9% of eighth graders admitted to trying steroids. Numerous studies have shown the use of steroids and steroid precursors to be on the upswing. Unfortunately, the compulsions to achieve a desirable body image, to succeed in athletics, or to obtain a college scholarship are strong motivators and influences. These influences cause some young people to risk their long-term health by using performance-enhancing substances as a short cut to meeting their goals." (Task Force Report, page 26.) Based on the task force's recommendations, on December 20, 2005, Governor Cody signed Executive Order 72, which directed the New Jersey Department of Education to work in conjunction with the NJSIAA to develop and implement a program of random testing for steroids.

2. *Why test for steroids?*

First, using steroids without a prescription can cause serious, adverse health effects. **Second**, using steroids and other performance-enhancing drugs can give athletes an unfair advantage over their competition, and is cheating. **Third**, testing for steroids can help deter their use among high school students. **Finally**, steroids are drugs that should be used to treat medical conditions. Possession or use of most steroids without a prescription is illegal. The NJSIAA recognizes that it will take a community-wide effort by parents, coaches, athletes, teachers and physicians to attack this growing challenge. Random steroid testing is one tool that can be used to help discourage athletes from taking steroids.

3. *What are some of the specific health problems associated with steroid abuse?*

The Governor's Task Force found that steroid abuse can result in a host of serious health problems. The following is a partial list of health problems associated with steroid abuse: severe acne, excessive hairiness in both sexes, male pattern baldness, deepening of the voice, abnormal permanent enlargement of the clitoris, loss of female body contour, altered menstrual cycling, increased libido in women, testicular atrophy, elevated blood pressure and other adverse cardiovascular effects, thickening of the blood, liver disease, increased aggressiveness, obstructive sleep apnea, enlarged breasts in men and women, impotence, blood clots, diabetes, elevated fats in the blood, premature closure of the growth plates resulting in reduction of height, migraine headaches, premature puberty and infertility.

4. *How did the NJSIAA develop its steroid testing policy?*

In early 2006, the NJSIAA staff worked with a specially-appointed "Steroid Committee" and with its Medical Advisory Committee to develop a list of banned substances and a policy for testing student athletes. The policy was formally adopted by the NJSIAA Executive Committee on June 7, 2006.

5. *What does the steroid testing policy say?*

The NJSIAA steroid testing policy states, "It shall be considered a violation of the NJSIAA sportsmanship rule for any student athlete to possess, ingest or otherwise use any substance on the list of banned substances, without written prescription by a fully-licensed physician as recognized by the American Medical Association, to treat a medical condition." **In short, use of performance-enhancing drugs by student athletes in New Jersey is considered to be cheating and will be penalized.**

6. *What is the penalty for violating the steroid testing policy?*

Any person who tests positive in an NJSIAA-administered test, or any person who refuses to provide a testing sample, or any person who reports his or her own violation, will immediately forfeit his or her eligibility to participate in NJSIAA competition for a period of one year from the date of the test. Any such person will also forfeit any individual honor earned while in violation. No person who tests positive, refuses to provide a test sample, or who reports his or her own violation will resume eligibility until he or she has undergone counseling and produced a negative test result.

