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CHALLENGE: TO MAKE THE RIGHT CARE AVAILABLE AT THE RIGHT TIME BY ACCESSING NETWORKS OF SPECIALTY CARE PROVIDERS IN SPORTS MEDICINE AND PEDIATRICS

The lack of specialized care for youth sports injuries is a problem everywhere, especially in the rural and urban areas of every state. Youth sports injuries have significantly better outcomes when they receive the right care at the right time. Parents do not have a need for that access until an injury occurs, so most are understandably unprepared.

The Coach Safely trained coach is supported in his or her community as part of a sports medicine continuum: increased knowledge of sports injury prevention and care leads to a closer connection to emergency management and specialized sports medicine providers.

The goal of the Coach Safely community engagement program is to bring greater awareness to the community about the preventable nature of youth sports injuries. Through acquiring sponsorships from the area's most qualified sports medicine and pediatric caregivers, the coordinator of community engagement will bring together a network that offers the most responsive access to care via priority communications.

Trained coaches and aware parents are active elements of preventing youth sports injuries. When an injury occurs, making the right decision on "what to do and when to do it" starts with the coach and parent. This requires understanding the level of urgency and level of care needed, a specialty called medical triage. Medical triage experts in the sports field, also called athletic trainers, work inside a network that has access to the right specialist at the right time. Without triage intervention, injuries have a far less positive outcome and can be a heavy financial burden.

Athletic trainers are typically a big part of the community outreach for sports medicine practices. Their medical coverage in an area usually includes high schools, but rarely reaches the recreational community. This is an enormously missed opportunity, since there are 8.6 million recreational injuries reported per year (with the highest rate of injuries concentrated between athletes who are between ages 5-14 years).

In addition to participating in the continuum of sports medicine care as first responders, trained coaches and aware parents also serve as a medical triage team. Their combined knowledge and assessment of youth sports injuries will determine the referral to either home, clinic, or emergency care, which should always be expedited for the best outcome. Coach Safely recognizes the physical and financial cost when proper medical triage isn't available. This is why, in addition to providing training for coaches as first responders, we aim to secure community sponsors that have youth sports triage capabilities and can provide priority access to the right care at the right time - including access to the Concussion Clinic at Children's of Alabama.