

The Student Athlete Mentor (SAM) Program is the primary substance abuse prevention program in the Athletics Department.

The SAM program was developed at the University of Virginia in 1989 as a joint effort between the Athletics Department and the Institute for Substance Abuse Studies (now the Gordie Center for Substance Abuse Prevention).

Goals of the SAM program:

- promote healthy lifestyles,
- educate student-athletes about the benefits of making low-risk drinking choices
- to create a safer social environment where the negative consequences associated with alcohol or drug use and abuse are reduced.



“Student Athlete Mentors, or SAMs, are student-athletes who want to make a difference in their teammates and other peoples’ lives.”

Gordie Center for
Substance Abuse Prevention
170 Rugby Road, Lower Level
PO BOX 800139
Charlottesville, VA, 22908

Phone: 434-982-5781
Email: gordiecenter@virginia.edu

The Life Skills Center
Department of Athletics
University Hall, 1-11
PO BOX 400845
Charlottesville, VA, 22908

Phone: 434-982-5781
Email: pgates@virginia.edu

Student Athlete Mentor Program



University of Virginia



What can the SAM Program do for Student-Athletes?

SAMs work as peers with other students on their team to help prevent substance abuse.

SAMs receive valuable training throughout the year in alcohol and other drug abuse prevention and learn to use educational and professional resources to support their efforts.

SAMs have the opportunity to:

- Be leaders
- Make a difference in the lives of friends and teammates
- Interact with other student-athletes and administrators
- Build skills
- Work independently to create model prevention programs



How does the SAM Program benefit athletic teams?

- Creates a safe & healthy atmosphere for teammates
- Provides leadership
- Promotes healthy choices concerning substance use.
- Teaches coping strategies and problem solving
- Improves interpersonal relationships
- Helps teammates find resources for problems before they get out of control
- Provides extra support for first-year teammates
- Facilitates communication between coaches and athletes
- Provides community service opportunities for team and teammates



Who can be a SAM?

Each team has its own method for selecting SAMs. SAMs can be volunteers, nominated and elected by their peers, or appointed by a coach.

Each team has at least two members who are natural helpers, leaders, role models, good listeners, non-judgmental, dependable, and sincere.



Shoot Out for Cancer

Sponsored by the SAMs, this fun, carnival-style event each April allows children and families to meet and play games with U.Va. athletes. The program was created in 1993 in honor of U.Va. soccer player Curt Onalfo, who was diagnosed with lymphoma in the early 1990s. Shoot Out for Cancer supports the UVA Stem Cell Transplantation Program. Since 2009, SAMs raised over \$17,000 for cancer research.