

What do People Mean When They Use the Term ‘Sports Psychologist’?

Only a **licensed mental health provider** can provide mental health treatment to student-athletes. Other professionals may provide sports performance consultation and sometimes, people refer to these individuals as “sports psychologists.” It is important to note that “sports psychologist” is simply a non-specific title that does not have a unique certification; some sports psychologists are performance coaches and others are licensed mental health providers. See below for a list of professionals who fall under each category.



Licensed Mental Health Providers

Licensed mental health providers are individuals who are trained in, and licensed to provide, mental health counseling; they include:

- Clinical or counseling psychologists.
- Psychiatrists.
- Licensed clinical social workers.
- Psychiatric mental health nurses.
- Licensed mental health counselors.
- Licensed family therapists/licensed marriage and family therapists.
- Primary care physicians with core competencies to treat mental health disorders.



Certified Sports Performance Consultants

Certified sports performance consultants are individuals trained and certified in areas of sports performance enhancement such as:

- Biomechanics.
- Physiology.
- Kinesiology.
- Psychology (may or may not be licensed).



Care Options

- Student-athletes may benefit from care provided by both a licensed mental health provider and a sports performance consultant when they are experiencing performance-related stress.
- Some athletics departments may employ individuals who are not licensed mental health providers, but rather are trained in performance enhancement. These individuals bring expertise in performance issues such as ‘mental toughness’ and ‘focus’; however, they are not qualified to diagnose and manage mental health disorders.

