

Graduate Certificate in Athlete Counseling

The Athlete Counseling Certificate at Idaho State University is a graduate certificate designed for counselors, social workers, psychologists, and other professionals, or students seeking expertise in athlete mental health at all levels of sport. This certificate builds on the foundational knowledge of mental health professionals and offers focused coursework addressing the unique intersection of mental health, athlete identity, and performance demands. Coursework emphasizes ethical practice, evidence-based intervention, and systems collaboration, preparing graduates to serve as competent clinicians in athletic departments, schools, community agencies, and consultation settings.

COUN 6674	Counseling with Athletes: Evidence-Based Approaches	3
COUN 6675	Team Dynamics and Systems Interventions in Athletics	3
Total Credits		9

Program Overview

Athlete mental health is complex, influenced by the intersection of sport identity, performance pressures, injury, transitions, and wider social and cultural contexts. Far too often, the training for mental health professionals overlooks the distinct needs and experiences of athletes. The Athlete Counseling Certificate is proposed to close this gap. Students will engage in coursework that equips them to address athlete mental health through a holistic and wellness-based lens, aligned with the latest research and professional standards.

The Athlete Counseling Certificate program consists of three courses: Foundations of Athlete Counseling: Mental Health & Performance; Counseling with Athletes: Evidence-Based Approaches and Team Dynamics, and Systems Interventions in Athletics. Collectively, these courses foster the knowledge, skills, and advocacy capacity needed for athlete-centered care, from high school and collegiate athletes to adult and professional competitors, as well as those facing retirement or injury. The curriculum emphasizes ethical decision-making, collaborative systems work, trauma-informed care, and culturally responsive practice.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the Athlete Counseling Graduate Certificate, students will possess the knowledge and skills to address the complex psychological, social, and systemic factors influencing athlete wellbeing and performance. Graduates will demonstrate advanced understanding of athlete mental health, identity development, and performance-related stressors across all competitive levels. They will apply evidence-based, culturally responsive counseling interventions to assess and treat both mental health and performance concerns in individual athletes, while navigating ethical, legal, and professional issues unique to sport contexts—such as confidentiality, dual relationships, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Students will develop competencies in consultation, leadership, and systems-level intervention to promote team and organizational wellness, collaborating effectively with coaches, athletic trainers, administrators, and families to ensure holistic care. Additionally, they will integrate wellness and trauma-informed frameworks, such as IS-WEL, into individual and systemic approaches, and advocate for equitable, culturally affirming mental health access for athletes in educational, community, and professional sport settings in accordance with NCAA and industry standards.

Admissions Requirements

For this certificate, students must be actively enrolled in a graduate-level mental health program (Counseling, Psychology, or Social Work), OR hold a graduate-level degree in a mental health field, both pre- and post-licensure.

Curriculum

Code	Title	Credits
COUN 6673	Foundations of Athlete Counseling: Mental Health & Performance	3