



March 20, 2014

Dear Parent/Guardian:

First, I would like to thank you for registering your child to participate in a Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks program. We look forward to having your child participate. Our main focus in our youth programs is to provide participants the opportunity to learn the fundamentals of that specific sport, use that knowledge to apply it in a game setting, to learn good sportsmanship, and to have fun.

Along with that comes the knowledge to parents that there is a possibility that their child could be injured while playing sports. One of those injuries could be a concussion. Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley signed House Bill (HB) 858 and Senate Bill (SB) 771, "Education - Public Schools and Youth Sports Programs – Concussions," into law. This law will help protect the state's student-athletes from the dangers of suffering a concussion. Here are some of the key provisions that we must follow in accordance with this law.

- Requires education of coaches, student-athletes, parents, and other school personnel about the nature and risk of concussions.
- Directs the Maryland State Department of Education to develop educational materials with the assistance of relevant stakeholders.
- Requires coaches, student-athletes, and parents to verify that they have received the educational materials when they participate in athletic competition.
- Requires automatic removal from play (game or practice) of the student-athlete who shows signs or symptoms of a concussion.
- Requires that the student-athlete who is suspected of suffering a concussion receive written clearance from a licensed healthcare professional trained in the evaluation and management of concussions before returning to the field of play.
- Applies to:
 - Student-athletes who attend public schools;
 - Student-athletes who participate in youth sports leagues that are played on public school lands; and
 - Student-athletes who participate in parks & recreation sports leagues.

Attached to this letter you will find information to share with you child about concussions, signs of a concussion, and what they should do if they think they may have a concussion. There is also a parent education sheet with a little more information. **You will also find a concussion training acknowledgement form that MUST be signed before your child can participate in our programs.** Please sign the form and return it to the Recreation Center or the Program Manger in charge of the program that your child is participating in. You will only have to sign this letter once a year, no matter how many programs your child participate in during the year.

Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks is a part of the National Alliance for Youth Sports and that is where this educational material has been obtained from in order to share it with you and your child. If you would like to take a free training about concussion awareness in youth sports you can go to their website and take a free training online. It takes about 15 – 20 minutes and you will receive a certificate at the end that you took the training. Below are the instructions on how to find the training material:

- Go to the National Alliance for Youth Sports website: <http://www.nays.org/>
- Click on the box labeled: FREE Resources
- Click on: Concussions in Sports
- At the bottom of the page under For Non-Members, click on: Free Training Program
- Under Sign Up click on: Click Here – you will need to enter your email address and create a password.
- Follow the instructions on the screen from there.

Please note that we are providing you this information to make you aware of concussions but know that we do everything to make sure that our programs are run safely to try and avoid children being injured in the first place.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to speak to the Program Manager in charge of your program or contact me directly.

Sincerely,



Jennifer L. Standish
Recreation Program Supervisor



CONCUSSION TRAINING FOR PARENTS

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A traumatic injury to the brain that alters mental status or changes the way the brain normally works. It is caused by a blow to the head or body that forces the brain to move rapidly inside the skull.

IDENTIFYING CONCUSSIONS

As a PAYS parent you have a responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of your child at all times, so it is imperative that you are always closely watching them and if any of the following signs are observed, or symptoms are reported, that you immediately alert the coach to remove your child from the activity.

Signs observed by parents or guardians

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets sports plays
- Is unsure of game, score or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows behavior or personality changes
- Can't recall events prior to hit or fall
- Can't recall events after a hit or fall

Symptoms reported by the athlete

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Does not "feel right"

DANGER SIGNS

If concussion symptoms become more severe you need to visit the hospital or call 9-1-1 immediately. Blood clots can form on the brain and squeeze the brain against your child's skull, causing serious damage. The following danger signs represent a medical emergency:

- Headache worsens or doesn't go away
- Weakness/numbness/ loss or decrease in coordination
- Repeated vomiting or nausea
- Slurred speech
- One pupil larger than the other
- Loss or decrease in coordination
- Restlessness or unusual behavior
- Increasing confusion or agitation
- Loss of consciousness/drowsiness/inability to wake up

DEALING WITH A SUSPECTED CONCUSSION

- 1. Have your child removed from the activity.** If concussion signs or symptoms are discovered immediately have the coach pull your child from the activity. Your child must not return to the activity until medically cleared.
- 2. Evaluating your child.** A coach, athletic trainer, or even you can ask short- and long-term questions to gauge your child's awareness and responses. These questions will help you inform the doctor of the severity of the concussion.
- 3. Visit a doctor trained in concussion management.** A doctor properly trained to diagnose your child for concussions should be consulted to determine the severity of the concussion and the steps your child needs to return to play.

Did You Know?

- *A player does not have to be knocked unconscious to have experienced a concussion.*
- *A concussion can occur in any sport or recreation activity.*
- *Children do not recover quicker than adults from concussions.*

STEPS TO RECOVERY

There is no set timetable for recovery following a concussion. Symptoms can last minutes, hours, days, weeks or even months before the brain has properly healed.

Repeat concussions can cause a rare condition more common in young athletes called *second impact syndrome*, which is more severe than the initial concussion and even fatal in some cases. Once an athlete has suffered a concussion, their chances of a second one are 3 to 6 times greater than an athlete who has never sustained a concussion.

Parents should monitor their children for additional symptoms over the next few days. Symptoms can often take a few days to appear. Athletes should never return to activities if they are still experiencing concussion symptoms.

Resting

Doctors recommend an athlete who has sustained a concussion get as much rest as possible in the days and weeks following the incident. Rest helps the brain recover and heal itself. Resting includes getting plenty of sleep and relaxing throughout the day while avoiding cognitive activities such as video games, watching television, board games, etc.

Consult with your health care professional trained in concussion management to find the proper way for your child to return to normal activities. If your child sustains a concussion make sure all adults involved in the activity know your child has sustained a concussion.

- 1. Returning to School** – Your child may return to school with shortened or half days with their doctor's approval. Cognitive and mental activities can be just as stressful on your child's brain as physical activities. All adults who interact with your child at school should be aware that your child has sustained a concussion and has experienced certain symptoms. These adults can help monitor your child at school for any symptoms that may arise and help accommodate your child's in-school needs.
- 2. Returning to Daily Life** - Your child's health care professional will give recommendations on what you can do for your child over the next few days during their at home activities. Those steps include making sure your child gets plenty of rest throughout the day and adequate sleep at night, including a strict bedtime every night. Allow daytime naps or even breaks from daily activity if your child feels exhausted or tired. Instruct your child to stay away from homework, reading, video games, cell phone, computer use, television, board games and any physical activities as well. Your child should eat properly and stay well hydrated to help the healing process.

- 3. Returning to Play** - Your child must receive written permission from a health care professional with concussion management experience before returning to play. Your doctor should also provide an action plan to get your child ready to compete again. Players should be symptom free at rest, as well as while doing any physical or cognitive activities, before returning.

Sample Plan

Begin one week after concussion symptoms have stopped. Each step takes approximately one day to complete and a player should only go to the next step if no symptoms have been experienced.

- Step 1:** Walking, light jogging, riding an exercise bike (5-10 min.)
- Step 2:** Moderate jogging and biking, light calisthenics, brief sprinting (20-30 min.)
- Step 3:** Sprinting or running, intense exercise biking, non-contact drills (45-60 min.)
- Step 4:** Full contact practice but in a controlled environment with teammates
- Step 5:** Game activity, assuming no concussion symptoms have been experienced

EDUCATION FOR ATHLETES

- **Educating your child** – Before the season, provide and discuss with your child a list of symptoms they might experience during an activity as a result of a concussion and stress to them the importance of reporting a bump or blow to their head to you or a coach, even if they feel fine. If those symptoms are reported to the coach, he or she should immediately remove your child from the activity as a precaution.
- **Teach safe play and good sportsmanship** – You should always educate your child to play by the rules and show good sportsmanship toward the opposition; rules are in place to help prevent injuries.
- **Wear the right protective gear** – It is also important to teach your child to wear their protective equipment properly, make sure it fits well, and that it is used every time they play.

Parents Association for Youth Sports

2050 Vista Parkway

West Palm Beach, FL 33411

NAYS.ORG | 1-800-688-KIDS



HEADS UP CONCUSSION IN YOUTH SPORTS

A Fact Sheet for **ATHLETES**

CONCUSSION FACTS

A concussion is a brain injury that affects how your brain works.

- A concussion is caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body.
- A concussion can happen even if you haven't been knocked out.
- If you think you have a concussion, you should not return to play on the day of the injury and not until a health care professional says you are OK to return to play.

CONCUSSION SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Concussion symptoms differ with each person and with each injury, and they may not be noticeable for hours or days. Common symptoms include:

- Headache
- Confusion
- Difficulty remembering or paying attention
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Feeling irritable, more emotional, or "down"
- Nausea or vomiting
- Bothered by light or noise
- Double or blurry vision
- Slowed reaction time
- Sleep problems
- Loss of consciousness

During recovery, exercising or activities that involve a lot of concentration (such as studying, working on the computer, or playing video games) may cause concussion symptoms to reappear or get worse.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I HAVE A CONCUSSION?

- **DON'T HIDE IT. REPORT IT.** Ignoring your symptoms and trying to "tough it out" often makes symptoms worse. Tell your coach, parent, and athletic trainer if you think you or one of your teammates may have a concussion. Don't let anyone pressure you into continuing to practice or play with a concussion.
- **GET CHECKED OUT.** Only a health care professional can tell if you have a concussion and when it's OK to return to play. Sports have injury timeouts and player substitutions so that you can get checked out and the team can perform at its best. The sooner you get checked out, the sooner you may be able to safely return to play.
- **TAKE CARE OF YOUR BRAIN.** A concussion can affect your ability to do schoolwork and other activities. Most athletes with a concussion get better and return to sports, but it is important to rest and give your brain time to heal. A repeat concussion that occurs while your brain is still healing can cause long-term problems that may change your life forever.

HOW CAN I HELP PREVENT A CONCUSSION?

Every sport is different, but there are steps you can take to protect yourself.

- Follow your coach's rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
- Practice good sportsmanship at all times.

It's better to miss one game than the whole season.

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/Concussion.

**Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks
Concussion Training Acknowledgement Form
Athlete and Parent/Guardian Agreement
July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015**

I, the parent/guardian of _____, hereby acknowledge having
(Full Name of Child*)
received the Fact Sheet for Athletes and the Concussion Training for Parents Information Sheets covering the signs, symptoms and risks of sports related concussions. I accept my responsibility to go over this information with my child. I also accept my responsibility to report my child's symptoms to coaches and Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks staff members. In addition, my child must not have any concussion symptoms before returning to play and it is my responsibility to follow up with a health care provider if deemed necessary by me.

I understand the possible consequences of my child returning to practice/play too soon.

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date

Print Parent/Guardian's Name

* A separate form must be completed for each child.