



Checklist

Creating an Athletics Concussion Management Plan

No athletic safety issue has garnered more attention recently than concussions and other traumatic brain injuries. The potential for catastrophic injury coupled with evolving science and legal requirements makes concussions a serious safety and liability concern. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) estimates that concussions account for nearly 20 percent of athletic injuries. Over the last five years, all 50 states established standards for handling youth concussions. In that same period, the NCAA has updated its concussion guidelines three times. Despite the attention, an October 2013 report on youth concussion by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) highlights that much is still unknown about the treatment and impact of this injury.

For each question, check the appropriate “yes” or “no” box. Review any box checked “no” to determine whether the suggested practice is possible. Use the “actions needed” box to identify any follow-up actions your institution may wish to take.

1 Pre-participation

Legal Landscape

Has your institution consulted with an attorney about complying with league rules, athletic association requirements, and relevant state laws pertaining to concussions, such as those addressing the:

- Education of coaches, parents, and athletes about the nature and risks of concussions? Yes No
- Removal from play of any athlete suspected of having a concussion? Yes No
- Requirements for evaluating and returning to play an athlete suspected of having a concussion? Yes No

A concussion management plan is critical to colleges in ensuring player safety and reducing liability risks related to concussions in varsity sports. Since 2010, the NCAA has required institutions to have a plan on file. College administrators can use this checklist, which suggests a protocol for pre-participation and response, to develop a sound concussion management plan for intercollegiate athletics. Institution club and recreational sports programs also may find this checklist helpful.

Signs and Symptoms

- Does your institution's concussion management plan identify the following signs and symptoms of a concussion? Yes No
- Loss of consciousness
 - Amnesia
 - Disorientation
 - Drowsiness
 - Difficulty concentrating
 - Ringing in the ears
 - Confusion
 - Headache
 - Nausea/vomiting
 - Fuzzy or blurry vision
 - Balance problems
 - Sensitivity to light and/or noise

Education and Documentation

Education

- Does your institution annually educate or train athletes about concussions? Yes No
- Does your institution educate or train the following individuals about concussions: Yes No
- Coaching staff (including volunteers)?
 - Athletics health care providers?
- Does your institution make resources about concussions available for the entire campus community? Yes No

At a minimum, do your institution's concussion education, training, and resources:

- Define concussions? Yes No
- Explain the potential seriousness of concussion injuries? Yes No
- Emphasize that purposeful or flagrant head contact is not permitted or safe in any sport? Yes No
- Provide the signs and symptoms of a concussion? Yes No
- Address the importance of promptly reporting concussion symptoms to medical staff? Yes No
- Explain the role of physical and cognitive rest in recovery? Yes No

Documentation

- Does your institution document which individuals it educates about concussions? Yes No

Assumption of Risk or Waiver

Do athletes annually sign an assumption of risk or waiver acknowledging:

Actions Needed

Actions Needed

-
- A concussion is a potentially serious head injury that can result in brain injury or death? Yes No
 -
 - Participating in their sport may result in a head injury or a concussion? Yes No
 -
 - They have received information about the signs and symptoms of a concussion? Yes No
 -
 - Helmets, face shields, mouth guards, and other protective equipment do not eliminate the risk of concussions? Yes No
 -
 - Purposeful head contact in any sport is not permitted? Yes No
 -
 - They will immediately report to medical staff if they suspect a teammate has a concussion? Yes No
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 - They will immediately report to medical staff if, following a blow to the head or body, they experience signs and symptoms of a concussion? Yes No
 -
 - They will not return to practices or games if experiencing concussion-like symptoms following a blow to the head or body? Yes No
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 - A repeat concussion is more likely when an athlete returns to play before symptoms resolve? Yes No
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 - The institution has the authority to permanently retire an athlete from sports if it determines the risks of concussive injury present a serious threat to his or her safety and well-being? Yes No
 -
 - *As permitted by state law:* They waive their right to sue the institution for losses arising out of a concussion injury? Yes No
 -
 - Given potential differences in the laws where your institution operates and where athletics competitions occur, has your institution consulted with legal counsel about which form—an assumption of risk or a waiver—is preferable for athletes to sign? Yes No

Coach Acknowledgement Form

Do coaches annually sign a form acknowledging that they:

-
- Received information about the signs and symptoms of concussions? Yes No
 -
 - Received and read the institution's concussion management plan? Yes No
 -
 - Understand their role in the institution's concussion management plan? Yes No
 -
 - Agree to follow the recommendations of athletics health care providers regarding removing athletes from and returning them to play? Yes No

Athletics Health Care Providers Acknowledgement Form

Do athletics health care providers affiliated with your institution annually sign a form acknowledging that they:

- Received information about the signs and symptoms of concussions? Yes No
- Read the institution's concussion management plan? Yes No
- Understand their role in the institution's concussion management plan? Yes No
- Agree to encourage athletes to report to a medical staff member any suspected illness or injury including the signs and symptoms of concussions? Yes No

Roles of Athletics Health Care Providers and Coaches

With respect to athletics health care providers affiliated with your institution, does your institution:

- Give them unchallengeable authority to determine the removal and return-to-play of injured athletes? Yes No
- Outline their roles in writing? Yes No
- Require them to practice within the standards established for their profession? Yes No

Are coaches prohibited from:

- Serving as the primary supervisor for athletics health care providers? Yes No
- Having sole hiring or firing authority over athletics health care providers? Yes No
- Challenging the authority of health care providers to determine the removal and return-to-play of injured athletes? Yes No

Medical History and Baseline Evaluations

Medical History

During the pre-participation evaluation of athletes, is information collected about:

- Previous concussions, including: Yes No
 - The number of such injuries?
 - Approximate dates?
 - Whether the athlete experienced loss of consciousness or amnesia?
 - The approximate length of time required for symptom resolution?

Actions Needed

Actions Needed

-
- Learning disabilities? Yes No
-
- Migraine or other headache disorders? Yes No
-
- Psychiatric illnesses? Yes No
-
- Chemical dependency? Yes No
-
- Seizures? Yes No

Baseline Assessment

During a baseline test a trained health professional may assess an athlete's history of concussions, balance, and, potentially, cognitive function. Baseline test results are then compared to a similar exam conducted during the season if an athlete has a suspected concussion. Does your institution:

-
- Use a baseline assessment that consists of:
-
 - A symptoms checklist? Yes No
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 - A standardized cognitive and balance assessment? Yes No
-
- Use the same assessment tools post-injury? Yes No
-
- If your institution uses neuropsychological testing as part of its baseline assessment, is a neuropsychologist or a physician experienced in the use and interpretation of such testing consulted in:
- Developing and administering the test?
 - Interpreting the results?
-
- Does your institution record a baseline assessment for athletes in each of these sports? Yes No
- | | | |
|----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| • Baseball | • Football | • Rugby |
| • Basketball | • Gymnastics | • Soccer |
| • Diving | • Ice hockey | • Softball |
| • Equestrian | • Lacrosse | • Water polo |
| • Field hockey | • Pole vaulting | • Wrestling |

Health Care Plan

For each varsity sport, does your institution provide athletes with:

-
- Access to health insurance? Yes No
-
- Equal access to athletics health care providers? Yes No

Emergency Action Plan

For each athletic venue, is there an emergency action plan addressing:

-
- Methods of emergency communication? Yes No

Actions Needed

-
- Emergency contact information? Yes No
-
- Emergency transportation? Yes No
-
- Available emergency equipment? Yes No
-
- Response to the following catastrophic athletic injuries and illnesses? Yes No
- Traumatic brain injuries
 - Heat illness
 - Spine injury
 - Cardiac arrest
 - Respiratory distress, such as asthma
 - Collapses due to sickle cell trait

Is the emergency action plan:

-
- Reviewed and practiced annually by coaches and athletics health care providers? Yes No
-
- Updated annually? Yes No
-
- Easily accessible (e.g., posted at the venue and on the web)? Yes No

2 Response

Removal From Play

Is any athlete suspected of suffering the signs or symptoms of a concussion:

-
- Removed from play (e.g. competition, practice, and conditioning)? Yes No
-
- Evaluated by a medical professional with experience in the evaluation and management of concussions? Yes No

Medical Evaluation

Sideline Evaluation

Does the sideline evaluation of an athlete with a potential concussion include:

-
- An assessment of airway, breathing, and circulation (ABCs)? Yes No
-
- An assessment of cervical spine and skull for associated injury? Yes No
-
- The same baseline tests used previously on the athlete, such as a: Yes No
- Symptoms checklist
 - Standardized cognitive and balance assessment

Because amnesia, confusion, and mental status changes are more sensitive indicators of concussion severity, does your institution note the following when evaluating an athlete:

Actions Needed

-
- The presence of and duration of amnesia? Yes No
-
- The presence of and duration of confusion? Yes No
-
- The time between the injury and the development of symptoms? Yes No
-
- Are athletes immediately referred to emergency medical services if these events occur? Yes No
- Prolonged loss of consciousness
 - Seizure like activity
 - Slurring of speech
 - Paralysis of limbs
 - Unequal or dilated and non-reactive pupils
 - The severity of the injury exceeds the comfort level of the responding athletic or medical staff

Returning to Play From a Sideline Evaluation

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- If an athlete is allowed to return to play following a concussion evaluation, does a medical professional monitor performance and periodically re-evaluate him or her? Yes No

Concussion Management

Removal From Play Following a Medical Evaluation

For athletes diagnosed with a concussion or exhibiting significant concussion symptoms, does your institution:

-
- Prohibit them from returning to play until medical clearance is granted and, at a minimum, for the remainder of the day? Yes No
-
- Take one of the following actions? Yes No
- Refer them to a physician or emergency department
 - Continue to observe and monitor them
 - Admit them to a hospital
-
- Ensure they are not left alone for an initial period of time? Yes No
-
- Provide the athlete and someone who can assist him or her, such as a roommate, with written instructions advising the concussed athlete to: Yes No
- Avoid alcohol or other substances that will impair cognitive function?
 - Avoid aspirin or other medication that increase the risk of bleeding?
 - Immediately contact medical staff if the following problems occur?
 - Worsening headache
 - Increased level of consciousness
 - Increased confusion
 - Increased irritability
 - Vomiting
 - Dilated pupils
 - Stumbling/loss of balance
-
- Regularly monitor the athlete for deterioration? Yes No

Physical and Cognitive Rest

Until an athlete is asymptomatic, does your institution require those diagnosed with a concussion to:

- Get physical rest by refraining from athletic play, practice, or conditioning? Yes No
- Get cognitive rest, which may include avoiding these activities? Yes No
 - Studying
 - Class attendance
 - Homework
 - Video games
 - Texting
 - Accessing social networking tools

When cognitive rest is required for an athlete, does your institution:

- Receive permission to share health status with academic advisors and professors? Yes No
- Notify academic advisors and professors about the concussion and related signs and symptoms? Yes No

In determining the appropriate amount of physical and cognitive rest, does your institution's medical staff consider the athlete's:

- Post-concussive clinical symptoms? Yes No
- Previous history of concussions? Yes No
- Severity of previous concussions? Yes No
- Recent physical exam? Yes No
- Sport? Yes No
- Position? Yes No
- Age? Yes No
- Support system? Yes No
- Overall "readiness" to return to sport? Yes No

Return to Play

Before an athlete returns to play after a concussion, does your institution require:

- Clearance by a physician or physician's designee? Yes No
- Completion of a medically supervised stepwise process that begins only after the athlete:
 - Is asymptomatic?
 - Has post-exertion assessments that are within baseline limits?

Actions Needed

Retiring From the Sport

- Does your institution reserve, in writing, the right to permanently retire an athlete from sports? Yes No

Is an athlete's permanent retirement considered if he or she has:

- A history of concussions, particularly when there is evidence that smaller forces are sufficient to cause another concussion? Yes No
- Post-concussion symptoms lasting more than three months? Yes No
- Evidence of a head or neck injury that would increase the risk of future concussions? Yes No

Before your institution permanently retires an athlete from sports, does it consult:

- Legal counsel? Yes No
- Applicable medical professionals, such as the team physician, trainer, and a neurologist? Yes No
- The athlete? Yes No
- The athlete's family? Yes No

Documenting Treatment

When treating suspected and confirmed concussions, does your institution document the:

- Incident that caused the injury? Yes No
- Evaluation of the athlete? Yes No
- Management of the athlete? Yes No
- Clearance of the athlete? Yes No

Actions Needed



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