Collaborating with Schools on Concussion: Three R's

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What are the three R’s and what are today’s objectives?

• Recognize there is more to going back to school after being diagnosed with a concussion than returning to sports: **Return-to-School (RTS)**, **Return-to-Learn (RTL)**, and **Return-to-Play (RTP)**.

• Identify the team that can help the student return to the school setting while still recovering from a concussion.

• How to help students and their families understand the need to engage their school team when the student returns to the school setting.
The Process of Returning to School

There is NO Return to Play/Sport until there is first Return to School, Return to Learn and Return to Doing the Dishes at home!

- Return to school and academics, push to and NOT through symptoms
- Mild/light aerobic activity DURING recovery is allowed this is not the same as the graduated Return to Play Protocol for student athletes
- If you EXPERIENCE symptoms, stop activity!
- Team members support the student’s return and COMMUNICATE as needed with each other to optimize the student’s recovery process

Return to School

Return to Learn

Return to Play/Sport
TEAM-BASED model of concussion management

An “Interdisciplinary Team” = Adults who provide multiple perspectives of the student/athlete AND who provide multiple sources of data to gauge recovery status

FAMILY
Who will be on the Family Team (FT)? Who from the family will watch, monitor and track the emotional and sleep/energy symptoms of the concussion and how will the Family Team communicate with the School and Medical Teams?

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
Who will be on the School Team/Physical (ST/P)? Who at the school will watch, monitor and track the physical symptoms of the concussion? Who is the ST/P Point Person?

ACADEMICS
Who will be on the School Team/Academic (ST/A)? Who at the school will watch, monitor and track the academic and emotional effects of the concussion? Who is the ST/A Point Person?

MEDICAL
Who will be on the Medical Team (MT)? How will the MT get information from all of the other teams and who with the MT will be responsible for coordinating data and updates from the other teams?
Communication Breakdown

- Home Care: No DX
- Athletic Trainer/Coach
- School Nurse
- ER/Urgent Care
- Primary Care Provider
Where can team communication break down?

• If the student goes to a coach or trainer after the diagnosis but they don’t share with the academic team, or the school nurse
• If the parent communicates with the teacher, but the teacher does not tell the nurse, the phys ed teacher, or coach
• If the Urgent Care, ER, or Provider Office doesn’t educate the parent/guardian to engage all other team members
• If the parent/guardian is unaware of the injury
• If the school nurse doesn’t communicate with the academic, physical activity and medical team members
Different starting points: Same team focused outcome

Scenario 1> Student athlete is injured during a game, goes to the ER/urgent care, gets diagnosed with concussion and follows up with the school athletic trainer or coach.

Scenario 2> Student is jumping on the bed at home and falls off sustaining a head injury, complains to the school nurse or the teacher the following day because they have a headache.

Scenario 3> Student is injured during non-school related activity like dance, cheer club or gymnastics and parents take the child to their primary care pediatrician.

Parents are advised to notify PCP, school nurse and AT/Coach. Point person communicates to school staff.

School nurse recognizes concussion symptoms, contacts parents, sports staff and teachers. Parents contact PCP.

Parent contacts PCP, advised to contact school nurse, sports staff if applicable and point person communicates to school staff.
Resources:

- The SC REAP Manual: page 16 has SC and national resources
- The SC Brain Injury Association Safety Net
  https://www.braininjursafetynetsc.com/who-we-are-1
- What Is a Concussion? | HEADS UP | CDC Injury Center
- mTBI_ReturntoSchool_FactSheet-Pin.pdf (cdc.gov) This is a good provider letter to send to the school.
South Carolina Student Athlete Concussion Law

The South Carolina Student Athlete Concussion Law was signed by then-Governor Nikki Haley on June 7, 2013, and went into effect starting in the 2013-14 school year. The law outlines requirements for safe return to play for student-athletes in all South Carolina schools, and requires state agencies, public schools, and professionals working with students to provide information and guidelines for safe play and concussion management to parents, guardians, and the public. The full law is available at the website:


SC State Law Requirements

- The SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) and the SC Department of Education must provide nationally-recognized guidelines and procedures regarding the identification and management of suspected concussions in student athletes on their public websites. The SCDHEC must also provide model policies that incorporate best practices and guidelines for the “identification, management, and return to play decisions for concussions” and continuing education opportunities for healthcare providers on concussion evaluation and management.
- The law applies to South Carolina High School League-sanctioned events.

Requirements for Schools:

- Every local school district must develop guidelines and procedures based on nationally-recognized model policies.
- Every year, each school district is required to provide an information sheet to all coaches, volunteers, student athletes, and their parents or legal guardian which informs them of “the nature and risk of concussion and brain injury, including the risks associated with continuing to play after a concussion or brain injury.”
- If a coach, athletic trainer, official, or physician suspects a student-athlete has sustained a concussion either during practice or competition, the student-athlete must be removed from play. He or she may return to play that day if and only if an athletic trainer, physician, physician’s assistant, or nurse practitioner evaluates the athlete and determines that he or she has no signs or symptoms of a concussion.

Requirements for Parents:

- Each year, ALL student-athletes, including cheerleaders, must have a parent sign the information sheet and return it to the school before they are allowed to participate in any school-based sports.
- If a student-athlete does exhibit signs or symptoms of a concussion and has been removed from practice or a competition, he or she “may not return to play until the student athlete has received written medical clearance by a physician.”

Statement of Liability:

- “The athletic trainer, physician, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner who evaluates the student athlete during practice or an athletic competition and authorizes the student athlete to return to play is not liable for civil damages resulting from an act or omission in rendering this decision, other than acts or omissions constituting gross negligence or willful, wanton misconduct. This immunity applies to an athletic trainer, physician, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner serving as a volunteer.”
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