

Appendix C-5

Sample Concussion Prevention Strategies

PPM 158 (Policy/Program Memorandum #158: School Board Policies on Concussion) recognizes the importance of prevention and states that every board policy should include strategies for preventing and minimizing the risk of sustaining concussions (and other head injuries) in schools and at off-site school events.

The prevention strategies have been organized into two main sections according to when they should be implemented:

- those strategies that should be used prior to physical activity (at the beginning of the school year) and/or prior to the sport season (e.g., interschool teams, intramural/house league activities);
- those strategies that should be used during a unit of physical activity, and/or sport season or intramural activities.

1. Prior to the sport season/beginning of the school year

a) Teachers/coaches/supervisors should:

- be knowledgeable of school board's concussion policy and procedures for prevention, identification, and management (return to learn and return to physical activity);
- be knowledgeable about safe practices in the sport/activity e.g., the rules and regulations and the specific sport/activity pages in the Ontario Physical Education Safety Guidelines;
- be familiar with the risks of a concussion or other potential injuries associated with the activity/sport and how to minimize those risks;
- be up to date and enforce school board/Athletic Association/Referee rule changes associated with minimizing the risks of concussion.
- be up to date with current body contact skills and techniques (e.g., safe tackling in tackle football), when coaching/supervising contact activities;

- be knowledgeable (when applicable) with the requirements for wearing helmets. (To date there is no evidence that helmets protect against concussions.) For more information on helmets please see the Generic Section.
- determine that protective equipment is approved by a recognized equipment standards association (e.g., CSA, NOCSAE), is well maintained, and is visually inspected prior to activity; and
- determine (where applicable) that protective equipment is inspected within approved timelines, by a certified re-conditioner as required by manufacturer (e.g., football helmet)

b) Boards, Athletic Associations and Referee Associations should:

- Consider rule changes to the activity, to reduce the head injury incidence or severity, where a clear-cut mechanism is implicated in a particular sport.
- Consider rule enforcement to minimize the risk of head injuries.

It is important for students/athletes and their parents/guardians to be provided information about the prevention of concussions. This concussion information must be as activity/sport specific as possible.

If students/athletes are permitted to bring their own protective equipment (e.g., helmets), student/athletes and parents/guardians must be informed of the importance of determining that the equipment is properly fitted and in good working order and suitable for personal use.

c) Parents/guardians to be informed of the:

- risks and possible mitigations of the activity/sport;
- dangers of participating with a concussion;
- signs and symptoms of a concussion;
- board's identification, diagnosis and management procedures; and
- importance of encouraging the ethical values of fair play and respect for opponents.

d) Student/athletes to be informed about:

- concussions;
 - definition
 - seriousness of concussions
 - causes,
 - signs and symptoms, and
 - the board's Identification and management procedure
- the risks of a concussion associated with the activity/sport and how to minimize those risks;
- the importance of respecting the rules of the game and practising Fair Play (e.g., to follow the rules and ethics of play, to practice good sportsmanship at all times and to respect their opponents and officials);
- the dangers of participating in an activity while experiencing the signs and symptoms of a concussion and potential long-term consequences.
- the importance of:
 - immediately informing the teacher/coach of any signs or symptoms of a concussion, and removing themselves from the activity;
 - encouraging a teammate with signs or symptoms to remove themselves from the activity and to inform the teacher/coach; and
 - informing the teacher/coach when a classmate/teammate has signs or symptoms of a concussion.
- the use of helmet when they are required for a sport/activity:
 - helmets do not prevent concussions. They are designed to protect against skull fractures, major brain injuries (including bleeding into or around the brain), brain contusions and lacerations;
 - helmets are to be properly fitted and worn correctly (e.g., only one finger should fit between the strap and the chin when strap is done up).

Sample strategies/tools to educate students/athletes about concussion prevention information:

- hold a preseason/activity group/team meeting on concussion education;
- develop and distribute an information checklist for students/athletes about prevention strategies;

- post concussion information to inform/reinforce symptoms and signs and what to do if a concussion is suspected;
- post information posters on prevention of concussions (e.g., encouraging students to report concussion symptoms) in high traffic student areas (e.g., change room/locker area/classroom/gymnasium);
- implement concussion classroom learning modules aligned with the curriculum expectations;
- distribute concussion fact sheets (prevention, signs and symptoms) for each student/athlete on school teams;
- Distribute and collect completed student concussion contract or pledge (signed by student/athlete and parents/guardians).

2. During the physical activity unit/sport season/intramural activity

a) teachers/coaches /supervisors should:

- teach skills and techniques in the proper progression;
- provide activity/sport-specific concussion information when possible;
- teach and enforce the rules and regulations of the sport/activity during practices and games/competition (particularly those that limit or eliminate body contact, or equipment on body contact);
- reinforce the principles of head-injury prevention (e.g., keeping the head up and avoiding collision);
- teach students/athletes involved in body contact activities:
 - sport-specific rules and regulations of body contact e.g., no hits to the head.
 - body contact skills and techniques and require the successful demonstration of these skills in practice prior to competition.
- discourage others from pressuring injured students/athletes to play/participate;
- demonstrate and role model the ethical values of fair play and respect for opponents;
- encourage students/athletes to follow the rules of play, and to practice fair play;
- use game/match officials in higher-risk interschool sports that are knowledgeable, certified and/or experienced in officiating the sport; and

- inform students about the importance of protective equipment fitting correctly (e.g., helmets, padding, guards).

b) During the physical activity unit/sport season/intramural activity students/athletes should:

- attend safety clinics/information sessions on concussions for the activity/sport;
- be familiar with the seriousness of concussion and the signs and symptoms of concussion;
- demonstrate safe contact skills during controlled practice sessions prior to competition;
- demonstrate respect for the mutual safety of fellow athletes e.g., no hits to the head, follow the rules and regulations of the activity;
- wear properly fitted protective equipment;
- report any sign or symptom of a concussion immediately to teacher/coach from a hit, fall or collision;
- encourage team mates/fellow students to report sign(s) or symptom(s) of a concussion and to refrain from pressuring injured students/athletes to play.

RESOURCES

- Ontario portal: www.Ontario.ca/concussions

Students/athletes who are absent for safety lessons (e.g. information, skills, techniques) must be provided with the information and training prior to the next activity sessions.