

A Basic Guide to Implement a Successful Concussion Management Program

With the pending New York State Legislation mandating concussion management, many athletic administrators are struggling with how to implement a concussion management program within their school district. The good news is that many of the aspects of a successful program have already been created by the NYSPHSAA and the NFHS.

The NYSPHSAA has recommended for the past two years that school districts adopt a concussion management policy for their school district. The NYSPHSAA and the NYS School Boards Association have collaborated on a draft policy that has been approved by the NYSPHSAA Executive Committee. This policy can be found at www.nysphsaa.org. Many other useful resources can be found at www.keepyourheadinthegame.org. Below are three basic steps athletic administrators can implement to get the ball rolling toward a successful program, even if the board of education has not approved a policy. These steps are:

1. Find the one person in your district that is passionate about student safety and form a school based concussion management team. The team could be comprised of a coach, school nurse, school physician, certified athletic trainer, athletic director, physical education teacher, classroom teacher, parent, and any other individual that may be useful to the team. The team will be able to monitor a student who has been diagnosed with a concussion on their return to school and play. The team may also serve as a resource to help educate the school community on the potential dangers concussions can have on a student.
2. Utilize the NYSPHSAA “Invisible Injury” DVD at all coaches, parents, and player meetings. This video shows the basic aspects of concussion management, including the signs, symptoms, and behaviors of a concussion, return to play and school protocols, importance of developing a concussion management team, and the benefits of neurocognitive testing.
3. Require all coaches to take the FREE NFHS Concussion Management Course offered on-line. The course can be accessed by logging onto www.nfhslearn.org. This course has material that the NYSPHSAA has been recommending for the past 5 years. At the completion of the course, each coach will receive a certificate to verify that they have completed the course. The course is 30 minutes in length and can be completed at the leisure of the coach.

Some of our member schools have purchased neurocognitive testing software and have members of their staff trained on administering the test. The NYSPHSAA Concussion Management Team is a strong supporter of neurocognitive testing as a tool to help evaluate a student who has been diagnosed with a concussion. Although neurocognitive testing is valuable, schools can implement the items mentioned above and still be effective without the neurocognitive testing. For schools who wish to purchase Impact testing, the NYSPHSAA has negotiated a reduced rate for Division I and Division II schools in our membership.

As you can see, there are many resources and materials that districts can utilize to begin a successful concussion management program. The NYSPHSAA, along with each Section Concussion Management Team, is available to assist the district with materials and resources to help the district implement a concussion management program. A concussion management program should not be implemented because of legislative action; a concussion management program should be implemented because it is the right thing to do for students.