



CONCUSSION AWARENESS AND SAFETY RECOGNITION POLICY

Objective

It is Special Olympics' intent to take steps to help ensure the health and safety of all Special Olympics participants. All Special Olympics participants should remember that safety comes first and should take reasonable steps to help minimize the risks for concussion or other serious brain injuries.

Defining a Concussion

A concussion is defined by the Centers for Disease Control as a type of traumatic brain injury caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head as well as serial, cumulative hits to the head. Concussions can also occur from a blow to the body that causes the head and brain to move quickly back and forth—causing the brain to bounce around or twist within the skull. Although concussions are usually not life-threatening, their effects can be serious and therefore proper attention must be paid to individuals suspected of sustaining a concussion.

Suspected or Confirmed Concussion

Effective January 1, 2015, a participant who is suspected of sustaining a concussion in a practice, game or competition shall be removed from practice, play or competition at that time. If a qualified medical professional is available on-site to render an evaluation, that person shall have final authority as to whether or not a concussion is suspected. If applicable, the participant's parent or guardian should be made aware that the participant is suspected of sustaining a concussion.

Return to Play

A participant who has been removed from practice, play or competition due to a suspected concussion may not participate in Special Olympics sports activities until either of the following occurs (i) at least seven (7) consecutive days have passed since the participant was removed from play and a currently licensed, qualified medical professional provides written clearance for the participant to return to practice, play and competition or (ii) a currently licensed, qualified medical professional determines that the participant did not suffer a concussion and provides written clearance for the participant to return to practice play immediately. Written clearance in either of the scenarios above shall become a **permanent record**.

Required Training and Timeline

All Coaches are required to complete one of the following concussion awareness training courses:

- The Center for Disease Control’s Heads-Up Concussion in Youth Sports training course, which is available at http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/online_training.html. Certificate of completion must be submitted to the state Program.
- National Federation of State High School Associations Concussion in Sports training course which is available at <https://nfhslearn.com/courses/38000>. (Many State Athletic Associations require their high school coaches to complete this course.)

Any concussion awareness training other than the above-referenced courses must be approved by SOI. For Coaches registering for the first time on or after January 1, 2015, confirmation of such training must be provided to the U.S. Program prior to the individual beginning volunteer duties. For Coaches registered prior to December 31, 2014, confirmation of such training must be provided to the U.S. Program no later than December 31, 2015.

U.S. Programs must implement a system for tracking completion of the concussion awareness training by Coaches.

Frequency of Training

Concussion awareness training must be completed by all Coaches at least once every three years.

Communication with Parents and Guardians

U.S. Programs are required to communicate in writing to all participants and/or parents/guardians, the concussion awareness and safety recognition program, as outlined in the Suspected or Confirmed Concussion and Return to Play sections of this policy.

The Centers for Disease Control website <http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/headsup/> provides additional resources relative to concussions that may be of interest to participants and their families.