 **A FACT SHEET FOR COACHES**

**THE FACTS:** A concussion is a **brain injury**. • All concussions are **serious**. • Concussions can occur **without** loss of consciousness. • Concussions can occur **in any sport**. • Recognition and proper management of concussions when they **first occur** can help prevent further injury or even death.

**WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?** A concussion is an injury that changes how the cells in the brain normally work. A concussion is caused by a blow to the head or body that causes the brain to move rapidly inside the skull. Even a “ding,” “getting your bell rung,” or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious. Concussions can also result from a fall or from players colliding with each other or with obstacles, such as a goalpost.

The potential for concussions is greatest in athletic environments where collisions are common. Concussions can occur in **any** organized or unorganized sport or recreational activity. As many as 3.8 million sports‐ and recreation‐related concussions occur in the United States each year.

**RECOGNIZING A POSSIBLE CONCUSSION** •

To help recognize a concussion, you should watch for the following two things among your athletes:

1. A forceful blow to the head or body that results in rapid movement of the head.

2. Any change in the athlete’s behavior, thinking, or physical functioning.

**SIGNS OBSERVED BY COACHING STAFF or SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY ATHLETE**

• Appears dazed or stunned • Headache or “pressure” in head • Is confused about assignment • Nausea or vomiting or position • Balance problems or dizziness • Forgets sports plays • Double or blurry vision • Is unsure of game, score, or opponent • Sensitivity to light • Moves clumsily • Sensitivity to noise • Answers questions slowly • Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy • Loses consciousness (even briefly) or groggy • Shows behavior or personality changes • Concentration or memory problems changes • Confusion • Can’t recall events prior to hit or fall • Does not “feel right” • Can’t recall events after hit or fall

Athletes who experience any of these signs or symptoms after a bump or blow to the head should be kept from play until given permission to return to play by a health care professional with experience in evaluating for concussion. Signs and symptoms of concussion can last from several minutes to days, weeks, months, or even longer in some cases.

Remember, you can’t see a concussion and some athletes may not experience symptoms until hours or days after the injury. If you have any suspicion that your athlete has a concussion, you should keep the athlete out of the game or practice.

**• PREVENTION AND PREPARATION**

As a coach, you can play a key role in preventing concussions and responding to them properly when they occur. Here are some steps you can take to ensure the best outcome for your athletes and the team:

**• Educate athletes and parents about concussion.** Talk with athletes and their parents about the dangers and potential long‐term consequences of concussion.

**• Insist that safety comes first.** Teach athletes safe playing techniques and encourage them to follow the rules. Encourage athletes to practice good sportsmanship at all times. Make sure athletes wear the right protective equipment for their activity (such as helmets, padding, shin guards, and eye and mouth guards). Protective equipment should fit properly, be well maintained, and be worn consistently and correctly. Review the athlete fact sheet with your team to help them recognize the symptoms of a concussion.

**• Teach athletes and parents that it’s not smart to play with a concussion.** Sometimes players and parents wrongly believe that it shows strength to play injured. Discourage others from pressuring injured athletes to play. Don’t let athletes persuade you that they’re “just fine” after they have sustained any bump or blow to the head. Ask if players have ever had a concussion.

**• Prevent long‐term problems.**

A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first—usually within a short period of time (hours, days, or weeks)—can slow recovery or increase the likelihood of having long‐term problems. In rare cases, repeat concussions can result in brain swelling, permanent brain damage, or and even death. This more serious condition. is called *second impact syndrome*. Keep athletes with known or suspected concussion from play until they have been evaluated and given permission to return to play by a health care professional with experience in evaluating for concussion. Remind your athletes:

***“It’s better to miss one game than the whole season.”***

**Coaches Concussion Action Plan**

1. **Remove the athlete from play.**
2. **Inform the athletes parents or guardians and give them a fact sheet on concussion.**
3. **Ensure the athlete is evaluated by a Medical Doctor, Nurse Practitioner, Physicians Assistant or Neuropsychology trained Psychologist.**
4. **Allow the athlete to slowly and gradually return to activity only with written permission from a Medical Doctor, Nurse Practitioner, Physicians Assistant or Neuropsychology trained Psychologist.**
5. **Contact your Licensed Athletic Trainer to manage the gradual return to activity program.**