



**Policy:** Concussion Awareness and Safety Recognition

---

The Special Olympics U.S. Risk Management & Insurance Task Force (RMITF) with input from the Medical Advisory Committee (MAC) has created the following concussion awareness and safety recognition policy that must be implemented by all U.S. Programs. While the attached policy is the minimum requirements all U.S. Programs must follow, it is recommended that U.S. Programs contact local legal counsel to ensure compliance with their own State laws relative to concussion management prior to developing/implementing this policy.

Both the MAC and the RMITF have discussed the need for a concussion management policy to ensure the health and safety of all Special Olympics participants. Additionally, insurance requirements and state law have driven many sports organizations to implement concussion management policies. Special Olympics' insurer, Philadelphia Insurance Company is requiring Special Olympics to have a concussion awareness and safety recognition policy in place.

Some U.S. Programs may already have a concussion awareness and safety recognition policy in place. If you currently have a policy that does not comply with the policy outlined below or if you believe your State law requirements are inconsistent with this policy, please contact Jina Doyle ([jdoyle@amerspec.com](mailto:jdoyle@amerspec.com)) or Brianna Schreiner ([bschreiner@specialolympics.org](mailto:bschreiner@specialolympics.org)) to discuss further.

The primary focus of this policy is the well-being of Special Olympics participants, and all decisions should be made in the best interest of the participants. **“When in doubt, sit them out!”** Please feel free to contact Jina Doyle or Brianna Schreiner with any questions regarding this policy.



## 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

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 the removal or return to play of the participant. 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 (1) 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 (2) 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 concussion awareness training, which is available at [www.cdc.gov/concussion](http://www.cdc.gov/concussion) and submit the certificate of completion to their state Program. Any



concussion awareness training other than the CDC’s Heads Up training must be approved by SOI. The SOI policy on “Return to Play” differs from the CDC’s training because Coaches do not see the Special Olympics athletes daily.

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.

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 [www.cdc.gov/concussion](http://www.cdc.gov/concussion) provides additional resources relative to concussions that may be of interest to participants and their families.



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

---

### 1. Who is considered a “qualified” medical professional?

- The definition of “qualified” medical professional varies by State. Each U.S. Program should consult local legal counsel to determine the Program’s definition of “qualified” medical professional.

### 2. Can a U.S. Program use a concussion awareness training system that is different from the CDC Head’s Up training?

- Special Olympics, Inc. will consider alternative training systems. If you are interesting in utilizing an alternative training system, please provide a copy of the training (or link to the training) to Brianna Schreiner ([bschreiner@specialolympics.org](mailto:bschreiner@specialolympics.org)) for consideration.

### 3. What is the recommended approach for communicating in writing the concussion awareness and safety recognition program to participants/parents/guardians?

- It is recommended that U.S. Programs provide the concussion awareness and safety recognition program with the athlete medical at least once every three years and also periodically distribute via newsletters, website, etc.

### 4. How often is the CDC training required?

- After the initial training is completed (as outlined in the policy), all coaches must complete the training and provide confirmation of such training to their Program at least once every three years. Frequency of training is consistent with the requirements for coach’s certification, volunteer screening and Protective Behaviors training, so that the training can be incorporated into the current tracking processes.

### 5. How should parents/guardians be notified of a suspected concussion?

- The Center for Disease Control’s website includes several tools that can be provided to parents/guardians of a participant with a suspected concussion. It will also be important to share with the parent/guardian next steps relative to the participant’s return to play, as outlined in the policy.

### 6. Is my Program subject to State law requirements?

- At this time, most U.S. States have laws addressing concussions. The requirements of the laws of each State can vary significantly, so each Program should consult its legal counsel to ensure compliance with local laws. In addition, the following website provides an overview of concussion laws in each state: <http://www.ncsl.org/research/health/traumatic-brain-injury-legislation.aspx#1>. This website should not replace qualified counsel, but can be used as an initial resource.