



# SOI Concussion Awareness and Safety Recognition Policy for Special Olympics Kentucky

February 2015



Policy: **SOKY Concussion Awareness and Safety Recognition**  
Date: **February 2015**

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 by January 1, 2015. While the attached policy contains 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 by January 1, 2015.

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 Justin Harville – Volunteer Services Director or Kim Satterwhite – Vice President of Program with any questions regarding this policy. This policy has been revised based on the needs of the Special Olympics Kentucky Program and State of Kentucky. This revision supersedes in its entirety the policy dated November 13, 2014 set forth by SOI.

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# 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 the following concussion awareness training course:

- **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](http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/online_training.html)

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

Upon completing the CDC training all coaches will be asked to visit: [www.soky.org/trainingcourses.htm](http://www.soky.org/trainingcourses.htm) to complete and submit the SOKY Concussion Policy Quiz. The results of this quiz will be immediately sent to Justin Harville at the SOKY state office and you will receive a confirmation email confirming your results being received. *This confirmation email will be validation of your completing the requirements of the SOKY Concussion Policy.*

## **Frequency of Training**

Concussion awareness training must be completed by all Coaches every three years in conjunction with their Class A Volunteer Application, Protective Behaviors and sport certification requirements. ***Any Coach unable to complete the above requirement within the time requirements will result in having their Class A Volunteer Status REVOKED until completed.***

## **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.

## **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 you complete a concussion awareness training system that is different from the CDC Head’s Up training?
  - SOKY 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 Justin Harville / [jharville@soky.org](mailto:jharville@soky.org)
  
3. 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 complete the quiz located on the SOKY website at least once every three years. Frequency of training is consistent with the requirements for coach’s certification, Volunteer Class “A” Screening and Protective Behaviors training.
  
4. 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.
  
5. Is my Program subject to State law requirements?
  - Yes, SOKY’s policy will comply with 2012 Ky. Acts, Chap. 72 (2012 House Bill 281) which reading can be found at: <http://www.lrc.ky.gov/record/12RS/HB281.htm>
  
6. Why are coaches for non-contact sports required to complete concussion awareness training?
  - Although concussions may be more likely to occur in contact sports, concussions can occur as a result of any organized or unorganized recreational activity, and therefore it is important that all coaches participate in concussion awareness training.

7. Why do Special Olympics' Return to Play requirements as outlined in the Concussion Awareness and Safety Recognition Policy differ from the guidelines provided via the concussion training courses?
  - The return to play guidelines described in some of the concussion training courses require gradually re-introducing strenuous physical activity over the course of several training sessions for those who have suffered concussions. Because Special Olympics' practices/activities do not occur on a daily basis as is often the case for interscholastic sports training, a similar type of return to play could be difficult to administer and could require a long period of time before an athlete is able to fully participate in Special Olympics activities. The Return to Play protocol included in the Special Olympics concussion awareness policy incorporates the RMITF's and MAC's careful consideration of the most appropriate Return to Play protocol for Special Olympics athletes/activities.
  
8. There are multiple CDC Head's Up trainings. Which CDC Head's Up training should Special Olympics coaches take?
  - The policy requires the **Heads-Up Concussion in Youth Sports** training course, which is available at [http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/online\\_training.html](http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/online_training.html). The CDC website includes other resources/tools for parents, clinicians and school staff that can be used, as needed.
  
9. What is the procedure for tracking coach completion of concussion training?
  - SOKY has implemented a quiz on the SOKY website located at: [www.soky.org/trainingcourses.htm](http://www.soky.org/trainingcourses.htm) to track the coach's completion of the required training in accordance to the above policy.
  
10. Why are coaches required to complete the training once every 3 years?
  - The 3-year cycle was chosen to coincide with the Volunteer Class A Screening, Protective Behaviors and Coaches Certification requirements.
  
11. What if a coach does not complete the required training?
  - The Concussion Awareness and Safety Recognition Policy outlines the training requirements for all coaches. Should a coach not comply with the training requirements every three years including the completion of the Class A Screening, Protective Behaviors and Coaching Certification will resulting their Volunteer and Coaching Status being REVOKED.
  
12. Does the Concussion Awareness and Safety Recognition Policy apply to competing Unified Partners?
  - Yes, Unified Partners who are suspected of having a concussion are subject to the Return to Play guidelines as outlined in the policy.