



CONSENSUS STATEMENT ON CONCUSSIONS

USA Swimming Operational Risk Committee

1.0 Purpose

The operational risk committee is responsible for providing a proactive environment regarding assessment of risks, and developing guidelines and educational requirements. USA Swimming and its members are aware of the growing concern regarding concussion management. The purpose of this document is to implement guidelines for member clubs (Clubs), Local Swimming Committees (LSCs) and meet hosts (Hosts). USA Swimming is providing a sample document which may be modified to meet your state requirements.

2.0 Guidelines

All athletes, coaches, officials and parents should receive fact sheets on concussions from their Club, LSC and/or Hosts. Any athlete suspected of sustaining a concussion should be removed immediately and should not return until evaluated and cleared by a licensed health care professional, trained and experienced in evaluating and management of concussions, acting within scope of practice. Compliance with all state and local laws dealing with concussion is the responsibility of the Club and/or LSC. A sample fact sheet is attached to this Policy. Electronic communication of the fact sheet (email blast) is permitted.

3.0 Application of the Guidelines

Clubs, LSCs, and Hosts are responsible for compliance with state laws regarding concussion management and education. Each state may have specific regulations that impact USA Swimming member clubs, coaches, officials, and/or sanctioned events. Some examples: Many states require coaches and officials to take courses on recognizing the symptoms of concussions and head injuries. Other states require sharing of fact sheets on concussions with coaching staff, officials, athletes and parents. A few states, such as California, may require organizations using school district facilities provide a statement of compliance with the policies for the management of concussion and head injuries required of the school districts by state laws. All of these guidelines are designed to protect an athlete, who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury during an event, from returning to practice or competition until they are evaluated and cleared by a licensed health care professional trained in the evaluation and management of concussions, acting within the scope of his or her practice. Most states, the National Federation of State High School Associations, and the CDC have educational resources that can be utilized. Concussion fact sheets must be shared with coaches, athletes, officials and parents.

4.0 Objectives

The primary goal of the Guidelines is to reduce the risk of harm to athletes and to educate coaches, parents, officials, clubs, LSCs, and hosts on the importance of concussion management. To the extent that health care professionals are involved in USA Swimming sanctioned events, they should review the Guidelines and the Consensus statement on concussion in sport developed at the 4th International Conference on Concussion in Sport held in Zurich, November 2012, or similar educational material.

5.0 What is a Concussion?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) define concussion as “a type of traumatic brain injury (TBI) caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head that can change the way your brain normally works.” Concussions can also occur from a blow to the body that causes the head to move rapidly back and forth. The Zurich Conference on Concussion in Sport also states that concussion typically results in the rapid onset of short-lived impairment of neurological function that resolves spontaneously. However, symptoms and signs may evolve over a number of minutes to hours or in some cases may be even more prolonged.

6.0 Signs and Symptoms of Concussions:

Athletes do not have to be “knocked out” to have a concussion. In fact, less than 1 out of 10 concussions result in loss of consciousness. Concussion symptoms can develop right away or up to 48 hours after the injury. Ignoring signs or symptoms can put an athlete’s health at risk!

Signs Observed by Coaches, Officials, Parents or Guardians

- Appears dazed, stunned or confused
- Unsure about event, location, or name of meet
- Forgets an instruction or assignment
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows mood, behavior or personality changes - irritability, sadness, nervousness, emotional
- Can’t recall events before or after incident

Symptoms Reported by Athlete

- Any headache or “pressure” in head - how badly it hurts does not matter
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light and/or noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Does not “feel right”
- Trouble falling asleep