

CONCUSSION PROTOCOL

Background Information and History

There is a significant amount of misinformation and confusion about concussions, and sometimes individual experiences or the media can clutter the information pipeline, and make it very difficult to figure out what to do and how to proceed. Hopefully, some information and direction will help provide clarity.

First of all, a concussion is a type of traumatic head injury that usually indicates some sort of damage to brain tissue.

The symptoms of a concussion can be widely variant depending on the area of the brain that was impacted, and the amount of brain that was impacted. Symptoms can also be impacted by a previous history of head injury and access to treatment. For example, when someone has a previous history of head injuries, they are more susceptible to future brain injury, and may not seek treatment as they don't believe they were "hit as hard" as a previous injury...but their symptoms could be the same-or worse.

Secondly, there is such thing as a "concussion protocol" but it is not a 'one-size-fits-all' plan that is immediately ready to be put in place. The history of a "concussion protocol" was primarily based in schools which have sports programs as a way to 'slow down' or 'stop' athletic coaches and/or parents from:

- not reporting concussions
- keeping athletes from seeking medical assistance
- putting athletes back into practice or competition without being medically cleared or assessed

Obviously, later, states realized that concussions affect more than athletes and sports, and allowed schools to make accommodations for students who have experienced concussions. It is important to note the law has been careful to differentiate between disability and a concussion in that experiencing a concussion in itself is NOT a disability, although it can develop into a disabling condition and SHOULD be accommodated, although also, not permanently.

Thirdly, the most important piece of implementing wrap-around services for a student who has experienced a concussion is to receive and follow a medical doctor's orders. When considering implementing a "concussion protocol" it is imperative a doctor provides information on the percentage of brain rest (an actual medical term!) in which we can provide accommodations around. For example, if a doctor recommends 100% brain rest for a student who has experienced a concussion, that student should not be at school. 100% brain rest means resting at home in a dark place without any sensory stimuli. Based on the amount of brain rest a doctor recommends, we then coordinate accommodations (length of classroom time, amount of breaks provided, length of focus, etc...)

Concussions and brain injury can dramatically impact a student's learning in significant and encompassing ways including endurance, fatigue, focus, confusion, emotional lability, impulse control, emotion management, problem-solving and executive functioning to name a few.

The law about a concussion protocol is NOT the protocol in itself, and should be highly tailored to the individual and their immediate medical needs-and then adjusted with their recovery and their doctor's recommendations.

Protocol Steps

1. Notify School Nurse/Health Aide Designee and Exceptional Student Coordinator as soon as possible
2. Provide/Obtain Doctor's Orders for Care. At the minimum, this should include:
The student's readiness to:
 - a. Return to learning based on the
 - i. Number
 - ii. Type
 - iii. Severity of symptoms
 - b. Date to return to school
 - c. Appropriate levels of cognitive and physical activity
3. Schedule Re-Entry meeting to discuss appropriate accommodations/modifications
4. Designate time frame to reassess progress and accommodation adjustment

PLEASE REPORT ALL CONCUSSIONS!

It's important everyone be aware of the impact of concussions as anyone might be the first to know about a concussion that may not be reported to the nurse, exceptional student coordinator or psychologist.

[Returning to School After a Concussion: A Fact Sheet for School Professionals](#)

[Helping Students Recover from a Concussion: Classroom Tips for Teachers](#)