

RISK COMMUNIQUÉ

Sports Program Evaluation and Preparation Tips

The following checklist should assist administrators and directors in meeting their professional obligation to the students participating in the sports programs. While interscholastic sports present serious loss exposures to public school districts so do intramural sports and physical education activities. These general guidelines should be used in all these activities.

Administrative Actions

1. Have all district, building and department procedures, policies and regulations been updated for current conditions and reviewed with all appropriate personnel before the start of practice?
2. Have all physicals been completed prior to participation and any question of eligibility completely cleared up before the student dresses for the sport?
3. Have all parental permission forms been received prior to student participation? If English is not the parents' first language, are you sure they understand what they have signed?
4. Do you check your athletes for excessive weight loss and possible dehydration especially during hot weather and after returning from any injury or illness?
5. Do you maintain proper records of all of your activities and report all injuries to the appropriate persons fully and in as much detail as possible? Have you reviewed last year's accident record and taken corrective action where indicated?
6. Do you have a policy regarding the return of an athlete to participation after an injury or illness? Does it include the requirement of a physician's appraisal and clearance?
7. Are you confident that the officials assigned to your games are as concerned with safety as you are and are competent to deal with this aspect of the sport?

Training and Communications

1. Have all students trying out for a sport been warned of the most serious consequences of injury possible and are you sure they and their parents appreciate and understand the warning you have given them? Confirmation of receipt of such warning should be a part of the parent authorization.
2. Are all coaching staff members properly certified and current in all other requirements? Is a first aid refresher a part of your annual staff development program?
3. Have you arranged for extra supervision and evaluation of those coaches who may be new to your staff or who may be coaching a different sport for the first time?

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4. Do your staff members carry reference cards, which outline emergency procedures, phone numbers and other important related information?
5. Are coaching staff members aware of the female athlete triad: disordered eating, amenorrhea, and osteoporosis? Are they prepared to address prevention, screening, risk profiles, diagnostic parameters, training dynamics and treatment?
6. In sports having physical contact are coaches warned not to over-match one player with another in terms of size, strength and skill?
7. Are conditioning exercises progressive and designed to promote flexibility and injury prevention as well as strength and agility?
8. Have you instructed your staff to obtain professional medical assistance as quickly as possible for serious problems or injuries, which cannot be easily diagnosed? Are telephones readily accessible on the field and on game trips?
9. Does the physician you employ for team activities have sufficient expertise in sports medicine or know where to obtain adequate guidance in this field?
10. Are all team candidates instructed in the safe practice of the sport they are engaged? Are they taught the basic elements of self-protection before scrimmages or first contact? Are you sure they understand and appreciate what you are trying to teach them?

Equipment and Facility Conditions

1. Are your first aid kits fully stocked and generally available to all activities?
2. Is all personal protective equipment in good condition and up to standard? Do you have enough of the right kind and size to equip each participant properly?
3. Is all field and stationary equipment inspected and ready for use? Are all fields free of depressions, ruts, rocks, glass and other hazards that will contribute to accidents?

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