

Concussions

Background

St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Schools is committed to promoting awareness of safety in schools and recognizes that the health and safety of students are essential preconditions for effective learning. All partners in education, administrators, educators, school staff, students, parents and school volunteers, have important roles to play in promoting student health and safety and in fostering and maintaining healthy and safe environments in which students can learn.

Research demonstrates that a concussion can have a significant impact on a student-cognitively, physically, emotionally, and socially. It is important to students' long-term health and academic success that school staff have information on appropriate strategies to minimize risk of concussion, steps to follow if they suspect that a student may have a concussion, and effective management procedures to guide students' return to learning and physical activity after a diagnosed concussion.

Definition

Concussion: is a brain injury that causes changes in the way in which the brain functions and that can lead to symptoms that can be physical (e.g., headache, dizziness), cognitive (e.g., difficulty in concentrating or remembering), emotional/behavioural (e.g., depression, irritability), and/or related to sleep (e.g., drowsiness, difficulty in falling asleep);

Procedures

Prevention

1. Staff will adhere to all guidelines in Administrative Procedure 260, Field Trips, Excursions, and On-Site Activities.
2. Staff will advise students regarding trip hazards and appropriate safety procedures.
3. Staff will adhere to the Safety Guidelines for Physical Activity in Alberta Schools and the Safety Guidelines for Secondary Inter-School Athletics in Alberta.

Training

1. Upon hire, and at minimum every 2 years, all St. Thomas Aquinas staff will be required to take course M-302, Concussion in Youth Sports – Heads Up.
2. Volunteer Coaches, who are not members of St. Thomas Aquinas staff will be required, at minimum every 2 years, to take course M-302, Concussion in Youth Sports – Heads Up.
3. The Division encourages all staff members to be proficient in administering first aid, and to take an approved first aid course from a recognized Alberta First Aid Agency.

Awareness

1. Any injury above the neck and to the head area should be treated seriously and investigated as a possible concussion. Concussions can happen anywhere.
2. Most concussions occur without loss of consciousness.
3. Students who have had previous concussions are at increased risk for another concussion.
4. Young children and teens are more likely to get a concussion.
5. Staff are encouraged to refer to AP 309 Appendix A – Concussion Fact Sheet for School Staff

Identification

1. It is the responsibility of all staff to take appropriate action if they suspect a student or staff member may have a concussion or is experiencing symptoms of a concussion or if a student self-identifies as having experienced a blow to the head or head injury. Don't let others pressure you into letting a student continue play or activity. "When in doubt, sit them out."
2. If unsure of what symptoms are or which symptoms to look for, staff are encouraged to refer to AP 309, Appendix A – Concussion Fact Sheet for School Staff.
3. Staff will administer appropriate First Aid. In certain circumstances a student or staff member may need to seek immediate medical attention.
4. Parents/Guardians will always be notified when a student has experienced a blow to the head or head injury of any kind and will be advised to watch for symptoms and that the student should see a doctor. Parents/Guardians will be provided a copy of AP 309-Appendix B - Concussion Guidelines for Parents and Caregivers.
5. Do not try to diagnose a concussion or the severity of a concussion. Only a health care professional can confirm severity and diagnose a concussion.
6. All accidents, injuries or blows to the head must be reported using appropriate accident reporting form(s)/mechanisms.

Management

1. After a student or athlete has been diagnosed and a concussion is confirmed, only a health care professional should make the decision regarding return to normal activity and a plan to reintegrate activity or play.
2. There is no preset formula for developing strategies to assist a student with a concussion to return to learning activities, since the recovery process will vary for each student.
3. If a student who is recovering from a concussion is experiencing long-term difficulties that begin to affect his or her learning, the school should follow established processes for identifying and documenting instructional approaches and resources that may be required for responding to the student's ongoing learning needs (for example, individualized classroom accommodations).

Reference: Safety Guidelines for Physical Activity in Alberta Schools
Safety Guidelines for Secondary Inter-School Athletics in Alberta
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Heads Up Concussion Resources
Public School Works – Course M-302
Section 31,32,33,52,53,196,197,204,222,225 Education Act