



**HEADS UP
FOOTBALL**

PARENT SAFETY MEETING

Implementing the Parent Safety Meeting

An important step of the Heads Up Football program is to engage parents and educate them about your organization's adoption of Heads Up Football and the key elements of the program. This is done so parents can gain a better understanding of the key safety information and on-field fundamentals that are being taught to their youngsters. To do this, you will need the help of your coaches.

Ensure that all head coaches schedule a meeting following one of their first practices.

- Coaches can take this time to introduce themselves and their assistant coaches to the parents of the children they are coaching.
- Explain the steps your organization has taken to enhance player safety by adopting the Heads Up Football program.
- Define a parent's role in the Heads Up Football process
- Point them to USA Football's educational resources and Parents Safety Course for more information.

The goal of these meetings is to teach parents the pillars of Heads Up Football: concussion recognition and response, heat preparedness and hydration, sudden cardiac arrest, proper equipment fitting and Heads Up Blocking and Tackling techniques. The important areas to address are why these topics are important, how things will be done in your organization to address each and what parents can do to support your mission.

This meeting should be scheduled by each team following the completion of the Heads Up Coaches Clinic. At that point, the coaching staff should be familiar with the specifics of your organization's medical protocols such as: return to play after a concussion and parents' responsibilities for hydration. Player Safety Coaches must register these meetings in their Dashboard to notify USA Football and comply with program requirements. Make sure you inform your coaches that they must let you know the date and location of their clinics.

There are Heads Up Football PowerPoints and printable handouts on your PSC Dashboard that you can provide to your attendees to enhance their meetings. Only PSCs have access to the Dashboard, so be sure to make arrangements to get them the support information they need. Let parents know that their USA Football membership is free and gives them access to the Parents Safety course and additional materials.

Sample parent meeting agenda

1. Introductions
 - a. Coaching staff and its role
 - b. Team Mom/Dad (if applicable)
 - c. Parent introductions
2. Team Information
 - a. Practice schedule (When, where, times)
 - b. Game schedule
 - c. Uniforms
3. Introduce Heads Up Football
 - a. "Our organization has adopted USA Football's Heads Up Football program to enhance player safety."
 - i. Our coaching staff has completed a coach certification course
 - ii. Our organization has a Player Safety Coach (INSERT NAME / CONTACT INFORMATION) who has been trained by USA Football to implement the program
 - iii. We recognize the importance of player safety
 - b. What a Heads Up Football parent can do
 - i. Educate yourself on health and safety issues with the USA Football parent safety course
 - ii. Support organization's policies and teaching methods
 - iii. Assist child at home with health and safety items you learn
4. The pillars of Heads Up Football include:
 - a. Concussion recognition and response
 - i. Signs and symptoms
 - ii. Organization's removal from and return to play policy
 - b. Heat preparedness and hydration
 - i. Hydration strategy for players
 1. Parents' responsibilities for fluids
 - ii. Organization's Emergency Action Plan – whole body cold water immersion
 - c. Sudden Cardiac Arrest
 - i. Location and accessibility of AED
 - ii. Organization's Emergency Action Plan
 - d. Proper Equipment Fitting
 - i. What a properly fitted helmet and shoulder pad should look like
 - ii. If something breaks, please let me know so we can address it
 - iii. What to know if you buy any of your athlete's equipment
 - e. Heads Up Tackling
 - i. The five fundamentals
 - f. Heads Up Blocking
 - i. The five fundamentals
5. Communication
 - a. Organization's plans for ongoing communication on important health and safety topics
 - b. Encourage parents to visit www.USAFootball.com to learn more

WHAT ARE CONCUSSION DANGER SIGNS?

In rare cases, a dangerous blood clot may form on the brain in an athlete with a concussion and crowd the brain against the skull. Call 9-1-1 or take the athlete to the emergency department right away if after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body the athlete exhibits one or more of the following danger signs:

- One pupil larger than the other
- Is drowsy or cannot be awakened
- A headache that gets worse
- Weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination
- Repeated vomiting or nausea
- Slurred speech
- Convulsions or seizures
- Cannot recognize people or places
- Becomes increasingly confused, restless, or agitated
- Has unusual behavior
- Loses consciousness (even a brief loss of consciousness should be taken seriously)

FACTS

Sometimes people wrongly believe that it shows strength and courage to play injured. Some athletes may also try to hide their symptoms.

Don't let your athlete convince you that he or she is "just fine" or that he or she can "tough it out." Discourage others from pressuring injured athletes to play. Emphasize to athletes and parents that playing with a concussion is dangerous.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF A CONCUSSION IS SUSPECTED?

No matter whether the athlete is a key member of the team or the game is about to end, an athlete with a suspected concussion should be immediately removed from play. To help you know how to respond, follow the Heads Up four-step action plan:

1. REMOVE THE ATHLETE FROM PLAY.

Look for signs and symptoms of a concussion if your athlete has experienced a bump or blow to the head or body. When in doubt, sit them out!

2. ENSURE THAT THE ATHLETE IS EVALUATED BY AN APPROPRIATE HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL.

Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Health care professionals have a number of methods that they can use to assess the severity of concussions. As a coach, recording the following information can help health care professionals in assessing the athlete after the injury:

- Cause of the injury and force of the hit or blow to the head or body
- Any loss of consciousness (passed out/knocked out) and if so, for how long
- Any memory loss immediately following the injury
- Any seizures immediately following the injury
- Number of previous concussions (if any)

3. INFORM THE ATHLETE'S PARENTS OR GUARDIANS.

Let them know about the possible concussion and give them the Heads Up fact sheet for parents. This fact sheet can help parents monitor the athlete for signs or symptoms that appear or get worse once the athlete is at home or returns to school.

4. KEEP THE ATHLETE OUT OF PLAY.

An athlete should be removed from play the day of the injury and until an appropriate health care professional says they are symptom-free and it's OK to return to play. After you remove an athlete with a suspected concussion from practice or play, the decision about return to practice or play is a medical decision.



WHY SHOULD I BE CONCERNED ABOUT CONCUSSIONS?

Most athletes with a concussion will recover quickly and fully. But for some athletes, signs and symptoms of concussion can last for days, weeks, or longer.

If an athlete has a concussion, his or her brain needs time to heal. A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first—usually within a short time period (hours, days, weeks)—can slow recovery or increase the chances for long-term problems. In rare cases, repeat concussions can result in brain swelling or permanent brain damage. It can even be fatal.



DID YOU KNOW?

- Young children and teens are more likely to get a concussion and take longer to recover than adults.
- Athletes who have ever had a concussion are at increased risk for another concussion.
- All concussions are serious.
- Recognition and proper response to concussions when they first occur can help prevent further injury or even death.

HOW CAN I HELP ATHLETES TO RETURN TO PLAY GRADUALLY?

An athlete should return to sports practices under the supervision of an appropriate health care professional. When available, be sure to work closely with your team's certified athletic trainer.

Below are five gradual steps that you and the health care professional should follow to help safely return an athlete to play. Remember, this is a gradual process. These steps should not be completed in one day, but instead over days, weeks, or months.

BASELINE:

Athletes should not have any concussion symptoms. Athletes should only progress to the next level of exertion if they do not have any symptoms at the current step.

STEP 1:

Begin with light aerobic exercise only to increase an athlete's heart rate. This means about 5 to 10 minutes on an exercise bike, walking, or light jogging. No weight lifting at this point.

STEP 2:

Continue with activities to increase an athlete's heart rate with body or head movement. This includes moderate jogging, brief running, moderate-intensity stationary biking, moderate-intensity weightlifting (reduced time and/or reduced weight from your typical routine).

STEP 3:

Add heavy non-contact physical activity, such as sprinting/running, high-intensity stationary biking, regular weightlifting routine, non-contact sport-specific drills (in 3 planes of movement).

STEP 4:

Athlete may return to practice and full contact (if appropriate for the sport) in controlled practice.

STEP 5:

Athlete may return to competition.

If an athlete's symptoms come back or she or he gets new symptoms when becoming more active at any step, this is a sign that the athlete is pushing him or herself too hard. The athlete should stop these activities and the athlete's health care provider should be contacted. After more rest and no concussion symptoms, the athlete should begin at the previous step.