



In December 2014, Special Olympics Inc. released a new Concussion Awareness & Safety Recognition Policy. Each U.S. Program is required to incorporate the new training into its regular screening of Class A volunteers. All Class A volunteers aged 16 and older are required to complete the training. Effective immediately, all new Class A volunteers and all renewing Class A volunteers must complete both the Protective Behaviors and Concussion Awareness trainings. All currently approved Class A volunteers have until December 2015 to complete the training and Special Olympics Illinois is requesting that this group please wait until after March 2015 to complete the training.

Please refer to information in this document for specific details about the new policy, how to access both trainings via the Special Olympics Illinois website, additional agency record keeping requirements and a list of frequently asked questions related to the new training requirement.

## **CONCUSSION AWARENESS & SAFETY RECOGNITION POLICY**

### **Objective**

It is Special Olympics' intent to take steps to help ensure the health and safety of all Special Olympics participants. All Special Olympics participants should remember that safety comes first and should take reasonable steps to help minimize the risks for concussion or other serious brain injuries.

Special Olympics' insurer, Philadelphia Insurance Company is requiring Special Olympics to have a concussion awareness and safety recognition policy in place by January 1, 2015. Additionally, insurance requirements and state laws have driven many sports organizations to implement concussion management policies.

The primary focus of this policy is the well-being of Special Olympics participants, and all decisions should be made in the best interest of the participants. **"When in doubt, sit them out!"**

### **Required Training and Timeline**

All Class A volunteers 16 years of age or older are required to complete concussion awareness training. The training can be accessed on the Special Olympics Illinois (SO ILL) website at <http://www.soill.org/class-a-registration/>. Upon completion of this training, both the individual and SO ILL will receive verification of completion. If the volunteer has successfully completed all other registration requirements, then SO ILL will process the individual's request to become an approved Class A volunteer.

Special Olympics Inc. has also approved the concussion awareness programs offered by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the National Federation of High Schools (NFHS) and the Illinois High School Association (IHSA). An individual already certified by any of these entities may use this certification in lieu of the SO ILL training but must submit their certificate of completion with their Class A Volunteer Registration Form.

Any concussion awareness training other than those listed above must be approved by Special Olympics Inc. Please contact Tracy Hilliard at [thilliard@soill.org](mailto:thilliard@soill.org) regarding requests for approval of additional training options.

For Class A volunteers 16 years of age or older, registering for the first time on or after January 1, 2015, confirmation of training must be provided to SO ILL prior to the individual being approved and beginning volunteer duties. For Class A volunteers 16 years of age or older registered prior to December 31, 2014, confirmation of such training must be provided to SO ILL no later than December 31, 2015.

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*Created by the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation for the benefit of persons with intellectual disabilities*



### **Suspected or Confirmed Concussion**

Effective January 1, 2015, a participant who is suspected of sustaining a concussion in a practice, game or competition shall be removed from practice, play or competition at that time. In the absence of on-site medical volunteers, coaches are expected to make the assessment regarding a suspected concussion. If applicable, the participant's parent or guardian should be made aware that the participant is suspected of sustaining a concussion. The coach will communicate this information.

### **Medical Personnel Volunteering At SO ILL Sanctioned Events**

Specific to Special Olympics Illinois, and at SO ILL events, if a participant is suspected of having a concussion then no volunteer medical personnel assisting on behalf of SO ILL, regardless of medical certification, will be allowed to clear an athlete to return to competition. Athletes will be required to see an outside medical professional to receive return to play approval.

### **Return to Play**

A participant who has been removed from practice, play or competition due to a suspected concussion may not participate in Special Olympics sports activities until either of the following occurs (1) at least seven (7) consecutive days have passed since the participant was removed from play and a currently licensed, qualified medical professional provides written clearance for the participant to return to practice, play and competition or (2) a currently licensed, qualified medical professional determines that the participant did not suffer a concussion and provides written clearance for the participant to return to practice immediately. **Written clearance in either of the scenarios above shall become a permanent record.**

### **Record Keeping**

Agencies participating in the SO ILL Program will be responsible for maintaining all records related to written clearances in return to play situations. These records shall become part of the participant's permanent file/record. SOADs are encouraged to work with appropriate agency personnel to create record keeping procedures. Upon request of SO ILL or in the course of any legal proceedings involving return to play situations, an agency will be required to produce written clearance records.

### **Tracking Completion of Training & Frequency of Training**

SO ILL is required to track completion of the concussion awareness training. Oversight of tracking procedures and maintenance of records will be done through the SO ILL office in Normal.

Concussion awareness training must be completed by all Class A volunteers 16 years of age or older at least once every three years. The records for Class A volunteers (criminal background check, Protective Behaviors Training & Concussion Awareness Training) will be synched to ensure all three components are on the same renewal deadline.

### **Communication with Parents and Guardians**

SO ILL is required to communicate in writing to all participants and/or parents/guardians, the concussion awareness and safety recognition program, as outlined in the Suspected or Confirmed Concussion and Return to Play sections of this policy.

The Centers for Disease Control website [www.cdc.gov/concussion](http://www.cdc.gov/concussion) provides additional resources relative to concussions that may be of interest to participants and their families.



## CONCUSSION AWARENESS & SAFETY RECOGNITION POLICY FAQs

Who is required to complete concussion awareness training?

- All Class A volunteers 16 years of age and older are required to complete the training.

Can an agency use a concussion awareness training system that is different from those listed in the policy?

- Special Olympics, Inc. (SOI) will consider alternative training systems. If you are interesting in utilizing an alternative training system, please provide a copy of the training (or link to the training) to Tracy Hilliard ([thilliard@soill.org](mailto:thilliard@soill.org)) who will coordinate your request with SOI.

What is the recommended approach for communicating in writing the concussion awareness and safety recognition program to participants/parents/guardians?

- SO ILL will add a reference to the training to the athlete medical, the Unified Partner Application and the Young Athletes Registration Form. There will also be periodic distribution via newsletters, website, etc.
- SO ILL encourages agencies to communicate the policy to participants, parents and guardians.

How often is the training required?

- After the initial training is completed (as outlined in the policy), at least once every three years. Frequency of training is consistent with the requirements for volunteer screening and Protective Behaviors training, so that the training can be incorporated into the current tracking processes.

Who is authorized to remove a participant from participation if a concussion is suspected?

- The coach must remove a participant if a concussion is suspected.
- At events that provide on-site volunteer medical support, a medical volunteer has the authority to remove a participant from participation if a concussion is suspected.
- SO ILL staff has the authority to remove a participant from participation if a concussion is suspected.

A participant is removed from participation because of a suspected concussion but appears to be fine after a couple of days. Are they still required to get written clearance to return to play?

- Yes, if a participant is removed from practice, play or competition because of a suspected concussion they are REQUIRED to complete "Return to Play" procedures.

Who is responsible for keeping records regarding "Return to Play" written clearances?

- The agency is responsible for maintaining all "Return to Play" records.
- The records must become part of the participant's permanent file/record at the agency.

Can a medical volunteer at a SO ILL event clear a participant to return to play if the participant is suspected or confirmed as having a concussion?

- No, if a participant is suspected or confirmed as having a concussion then no volunteer medical personnel assisting on behalf of SO ILL, regardless of medical certification, will be allowed to clear a participant to return to play.