

## Guidance on Communications After a Non-Concussion Sports Injury

Teens who participate in extracurricular activities have a positive alternative to using drugs and alcohol. When student athletes are sidelined with an injury, their time may be less structured, they may be in need of pain management, and they may lose their connections to a supportive community. This may be a time of increased risk for substance misuse.

Coaches and parents or guardians should remember that they each have the same goal: ensuring the best possible outcome for the child. When a student athlete is injured, coaches and parents or guardians should work together to share information about the diagnosis and treatment plan and to craft the plan for returning to play.



- ▶ Adolescence is a time when students are encouraged to advocate for themselves and become more independent. **However, when it comes to health and injury, it is essential that a parent or guardian become involved.**
- ▶ **Information-sharing** should be coordinated among all those who may be appropriate in the care and management of a sports injury. This may include the parent or guardian, physician, school nurse, athletic trainer, physical therapist, coach, and/or athletic director. These individuals, as appropriate, should all participate in return-to-play decisions.
- ▶ **Pay attention to the social and emotional impact** of a sports injury. Being sidelined may lead to general depression and a loss of structured activity, connection to friends, and identity as an athlete. Speak to the student athlete about his or her preferences, and find ways for the athlete to stay involved with the team.
- ▶ **Return-to-play decisions** should have the proper healing of the injured athlete as the primary objective. Some students may be eager to return to the game and will try to mask their discomfort. To avoid improper healing and premature participation, have a medical professional and/or the school's athletic trainer make the final decision regarding the athlete's return-to-play plan.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health, The Massachusetts Technical Assistance Partnership for Prevention, and the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association support your efforts to keep youth healthy and strong.