



for Athletic Directors and Coaches



Warn and inform student athletes to reduce the risk of injuries

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Coaches have the duty to warn and inform students and parents about the possibilities and seriousness of potential injuries while participating in school sports. Therefore:

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- Require all participants to complete a medical examination form including an informed consent to play and general warning statement. Use sport specific inherent risk forms.
- Hold student/parent meetings before the season starts
- Inform students and parent about all safety procedures
- Require and retain signed sport specific inherent risk forms.
- Share safety information by handout, internet, or DVD
- Reinforce rules and regulations regularly
- Review the above throughout the school year. Repeat, reinforce, document.

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The responsible coach is one that teaches students how injuries can occur and how to avoid them. Common sense ideas that also reduce the risks of injuries to athletes include:

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- Follow safety procedures as specified by WIAA, your school district policies and best practice recommendations
- Utilize an Athletic Trainer, Athletic Director or Risk Manager to identify best practices. This is your best offense against student injuries and litigation.
- Condition athletes for the specific activities they will be engaging in. Don't assume they will arrive "ready-to-go." Incorporate specific exercises that will prepare athletes for the particular sport they are playing.
- Develop a progression of activities that will prepare athletes for competition. Slow, regimented step-by-step activities that prepare athletes are essential.
- Keep records of safety training, conditioning activities and student attendance. Document the steps you take to get students conditioned and keep them safe. This will also provide defense in the case of an injury or lawsuit.
- Proper conditioning is more than just physical. Athletes should be reminded to eat well, get plenty of rest, and organize their time.
- Continue to make time for conditioning.
- Stay knowledgeable about new regulations such as the Lystedt Act, Washington's concussion law.

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Coaches that establish themselves as a reasonable, prudent professional are building the best defense they can against legal entanglements.