



March 8, 2016

**To:** State Presidents, Executive Directors/CEOs, Risk Management Chairpersons & State Offices  
**From:** US Youth Soccer Risk Management Committee (RMC)  
**Re:** US Soccer's Campaign for Player Safety

As you are aware, a resolution was recently reached in concussion litigation filed in August of 2014 against US Soccer Federation, US Youth Soccer, AYSO, US Club Soccer and California Youth Soccer Association North. In brief, US Soccer and the member defendants agreed to work towards initiatives designed to improve concussion awareness and education among youth coaches, referees, parents and players.

US Soccer concussion recommendations include, but are not limited to:

- Modifying substitution rules to allow players who may have suffered a concussion during games to be evaluated without penalty.
- Eliminating heading for:
  - All players age 10 years old and younger, regardless of what age group program they are playing in.
  - All players in U11 programs and younger.
- Limiting the amount of heading in practice for all players between the ages of 11 and 13; no limit on heading in games.
- Health Care Professionals (HCP) being on site for major tournaments.

[Read more on US Soccer Concussion Guidelines](#)

US Soccer Representatives recently identified its Concussion Guidelines as Best Practices. These Best Practices came about through extensive research by US Soccer's Medical Advisory Group, which includes experts in the field of concussion diagnosis and management, as well as from its technical advisors.

**Adoption and implementation is recommended.**

In December 2015, US Soccer introduced a comprehensive player health and safety program known as 'Recognize to Recover' (R2R). US Soccer's Recognize to Recover (R2R) initiatives are not mandatory. US Soccer has relayed that their R2R program will continue to expand and evolve. US Soccer encourages its member organizations to carefully review and consider the R2R information, presented to-date, and in the future.

Initial areas of focus as it relates to US Soccer's Recognize to Recover (R2R) Program include, but are not limited to:

- Improving concussion awareness and education among youth coaches, referees, parents and players.
- Uniform concussion management and return to play protocols for youth players.
- Modifying substitution rules to allow players who may have suffered a concussion during games to be evaluated without penalty.
- Recommends eliminating heading for all players age 10 years and younger, regardless of what age group they are playing in.
- Recommends eliminating heading for all players in U11 programs and younger.
- Recommends limiting the amount of heading in practice for all players between 11 and 13; no limit on heading in games.

- Recommends that all coaches be instructed to teach and emphasize the importance of proper techniques for heading the ball.
- Recommends an adequate number of Health Care Professionals (HCP) be present at all tournaments with 64 or more teams at U11 and older age groups. Health Care Professionals are considered licensed professionals such as an Athletic Trainer Certified (ATC) or Physician (MD/DO), with skills in emergency care, sports medicine injuries and experience related to concussion evaluation and management.
- Recommends where a Health Care Professional (HCP) is present at games, any player who sustains a significant blow to the head or body, who complains about or is exhibiting symptoms consistent with having suffered a concussion or is otherwise suspected of having sustained a concussion, must be evaluated on the sideline by a on-site HCP. This professional will perform applicable testing-SCAT3 or Child SCAT3 and modified BESS to evaluate players on the field/sideline. Any player suspected of suffering a concussion will not be allowed to return to play until he/she is cleared by the Health Care Professional. Coaches, parents/guardians or players may not overrule the Health Care Professional. If a coach seeks to allow a player to re-enter the game who had been removed from a game for a concussion assessment and who has not been cleared to return to play by the on-site HCP, the referee shall issue a warning to the coach. If a coach persists in seeking to allow such player to re-enter the game after having been issued a warning, the referee is entitled to take other disciplinary measures against the coach as are permitted.
- Recommends where no Health Care Professional (HCP) is present at a game or practice that any player who sustains a significant blow to the head or body, who complains about or is exhibiting symptoms consistent with having suffered a concussion or is otherwise suspected of having sustained a concussion, must be evaluated by an HCP before the player will be allowed to return to practice or play. No coach shall permit a player who has been removed from a game for a concussion assessment to return to play until cleared to do so by an HCP. If a coach seeks to allow a player who had been removed from a game for a concussion assessment to re-enter the game, the referee shall allow the player to return to the field but shall immediately stop play, direct the player to leave the field of play and direct the coach to remove the player and select a substitute. If a coach seeks to allow a player to re-enter who had been removed from a game for a concussion assessment, the referee shall issue a warning to the coach. If a coach persists in seeking to allow such player to re-enter the game after having been issued a warning, the referee is entitled to take such other disciplinary measures as are permitted. Unless an HCP determines that the player has not suffered a concussion, and clears the player to return to play, the player will not be permitted to return to practice or play until the player has successfully completed the return to play protocol and has been cleared to return to play by a Physician.

[Read more about Recognize to Recover](#)

Should you have questions regarding on US Soccer's Recognize to Recover (R2R) program or on US Soccer's initiatives in the area of player safety, we encourage you to contact US Soccer at [medical@ussoccer.org](mailto:medical@ussoccer.org).