



FACT SHEET

Safe Sport and Physical Education at School

Sport and physical education are important parts of any school's curriculum. Regular participation in physical activity has the potential to deliver physical and emotional benefits, providing young people with the opportunity to improve their fitness, interact socially and achieve personal goals.

There's a degree of risk associated with all sport, even a simple game of handball or a jog around the oval. Some activities, such as high contact sports like rugby or AFL, involve a higher level of risk. One of the most significant risks associated with sport and physical education is injury. Students risk sustaining injuries ranging from minor cuts and scrapes through to broken bones, head injuries and other life-threatening conditions, regardless of their fitness or ability.

The impact of a serious incident on the sporting field, can extend well beyond any immediate, physical injuries sustained by participants. Friends and family, other students, teachers and even members of the broader school community may experience trauma and require counselling and ongoing support after witnessing an incident. There is also the risk of damage to a school's reputation, the possibility a school will be in breach of their duty of care or a statutory requirement and face litigation or incur regulatory penalties.

The fact that sport and physical education are high-risk activities doesn't mean they should be avoided. Thankfully, the benefits far outweigh the risks, but schools have a clear, legal obligation to minimise and manage the risks and provide a safe and inclusive program.



Understand the risks

Schools need to strike the right balance between acceptable risks (those with clear educational benefits which may be managed or controlled through good risk management) and unacceptable risks (those which should wherever possible be eliminated).

The best way to identify your school's unique set of risks is to conduct a risk assessment of your entire sport and physical education program, along with individual risk assessments for those sports identified as high risk.

While injuries often occur during the regular course of play, there are certain factors capable of dramatically increasing the risk. These may include inadequate training or supervision of students and teachers, ill-fitting or out-dated protective gear, incorrectly installed or damaged sporting equipment, poorly maintained grounds, surfaces and infrastructure.

The risk assessment process will help you build a thorough understanding of the unique environment, or context, in which your program operates, reducing the likelihood of risks being missed.

Clarifying the goals and objectives of your program, or the educational purpose, will help identify the individuals and organisations you're likely to come in contact with, and the regulations and codes you'll need to comply with.

Your goals and objectives are also likely to determine the environments you'll operate in. Some schools run their program exclusively from their site, others use a range of locations or send students to other schools. This has a big influence on risk as factors such as transportation, supervision and consent must be considered.

Other factors likely to influence your level of risk will include:

- ◆ The types of sports and activities you offer, i.e. contact or non-contact sports.
- ◆ The condition of your grounds and facilities.
- ◆ The skills and qualifications of staff.
- ◆ The ages, abilities and health needs of your students.

Implement effective policies and processes

Having policies, processes and procedures in place to treat or manage risk will greatly reduce the likelihood and the impact of an incident. Workers, including teachers, volunteers and contractors should be involved in the development of policies and appropriate information and training should be provided to ensure everyone understands what is required.

While the types of policies and procedures required will depend on the program and the outcome of your risk assessment, schools should consider implementing the following policies and developing appropriate procedures to support them.

- ◆ Sport and Physical Education Policy
- ◆ Codes of Behaviour
- ◆ Specific policies for individual sports i.e. swimming, rugby, gymnastics
- ◆ Sports ground, facilities and equipment inspection procedure
- ◆ Sun Protection Guidelines
- ◆ Incident Management Policy and Guidelines
- ◆ Concussion Protocol
- ◆ First Aid Policy
- ◆ Consent Policy

Emergency plans should also be in place and activated should a serious incident occur.

Communication and training

Workers, including teachers, contractors and volunteers involved in the delivery of sports and physical education must receive appropriate training in all relevant policies and procedures. This could take the form of a group session, online training program or a one-on-one briefing depending on the age, experience and location of workers. This training should also be part of the induction process.

Regular communication with the teachers responsible for each activity in relation to individual students is also very important, in particular the sharing of information relating to student health or medical conditions.

Monitoring and review

Policies and procedures should be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis to ensure all details are up-to-date. Reviews should also be completed after an incident, following any changes to buildings or property or if the curriculum changes.

Monitoring of relevant guidelines and regulations for specific sports should happen on a regular basis. Legislation is frequently updated, regulations amended, equipment specifications and training requirements change. Schools need to ensure they are compliant.

Sports grounds and equipment should be inspected regularly with any necessary repairs or replacements carried out and documented.

Practical help

CCI has a number of useful publications on this and many other topics available at www.risksupport.ccinsurance.org.au or by calling the *risksupport* Helpdesk on **1300 660 827**.

Information and assistance is also available from your state or territory government, and your Education Office.

If you would like further information about Safe Sport and Physical Education at School, please contact the *risksupport* Helpdesk on:

1300 660 827
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