

CONCUSSION FACT SHEET FOR EDUCATORS



WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A CONCUSSION IS A TYPE OF TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY CAUSED BY A FORCE TO THE HEAD OR BODY THAT LEADS TO A CHANGE IN BRAIN FUNCTION. IT IS NOT TYPICALLY ACCOMPANIED BY LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

RETURNING TO SCHOOL/LIFE AFTER A CONCUSSION

About 80% of concussed individuals take about **3-4 weeks to recover**. During recovery, academic performance may be hindered and **school adjustments may be needed**. Academic adjustments may be difficult to implement because of instructional style, pace and subject matter. The chart below can be used to help educators determine what kind of adjustments may be implemented.

ENERGY CRISIS AND MENTAL FATIGUE

How can you temporarily **decrease mental demands** on a recovering individual while still helping them learn over the three to four weeks of recovery?

- Can you focus on conceptualization and less on memorization?
- Can you exempt/postpone exams?
- Can you focus on quality of learning rather than quantity?
- Can you allow students five to ten minutes to refuel?
- Can you reduce in-class, homework and non-essential repetitive work?

PROCESSING SPEED AND WORK OUTPUT

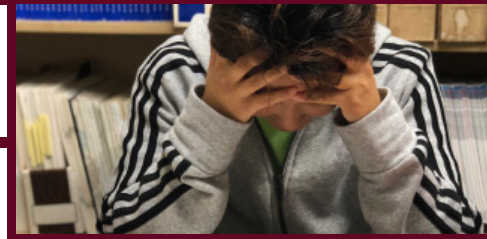
How can you **decrease work output** from your concussed students?

- Can the student listen and learn by being present in class?
- Can the student demonstrate learning in an alternate fashion such as discussion or oral presentation?
- Can you remove non-essential work?
- Can you allow extra time for essential work?

OCULAR DYSFUNCTION AND NOTE TAKING

How can you **decrease the visual overload** for your recovering concussed students?

- Can you allow students a five to ten minute break to rest their eyes?
- Can the student listen and learn by being present in the classroom?
- Can you give the student class notes?
- Can the student sit in the front of the classroom?
- Can the student have decreased computer time for technology centered subjects?
- Can you allow the student to wear sunglasses?



STRESS AND ANXIETY

Not being able to perform academically can cause significant stress and anxiety for a student with a concussion. Some ways to help are:

- **Reassurance**.
- **Do NOT postpone assignments** for a later date. It will pile up and the feeling of being overwhelmed may lead to increased anxiety. Extending time to complete work may be a better option.
- Be aware of **changes in social interaction**. It is not uncommon for concussed students to be withdrawn or more irritable.
- **Seek assistance** from counselors.

TAKE CONCUSSIONS SERIOUSLY. YOUR STUDENTS' FUTURE SHOULD BE A PRIORITY. EDUCATORS PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN CARING FOR STUDENTS WITH A CONCUSSION.

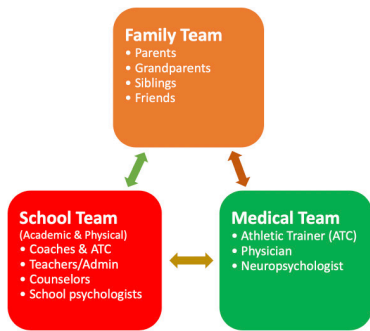
TEAM APPROACH TO CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT

A concussion can affect an individual's **physical, cognitive and emotional well-being**, therefore professionals from the medical community, educational system, and family members are needed. The **collaboration of these professionals** form a team that helps to determine:

- Symptom management
- Academic progressions or return to learn
- Social and emotional health of the concussed individual
- Return to activity or play

The **Multidisciplinary Concussion Management Team approach** is the safest and best practice to monitor and manage a concussed individual. The team communicates and collaborates with each other to determine what is best for the student.

The involvement of professionals will **vary with each concussion case** and the resources available. The main point is that the information is shared between the medical, family, and school teams **work together** to determine what is best for the concussed student.



45% of concussed students reported a recurrence or worsening of concussion symptoms when returning to school. (Carson et al., 2014)

EDUCATOR INPUT TO THE CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT TEAM IS VITAL

An educator's input to the management team will help determine further academic, medical, psychological and physical care needed for the recovering concussed student.

- Most qualified to **decide and carry out** temporary classroom adjustments.
- Most qualified to **provide feedback** on a concussed individual's cognitive function.
- Have **"baseline knowledge"** of the student's cognitive ability, behavior and social function.



For additional information on the concussion management team and the role it plays in helping an individual with a concussion, check out **REAP, a community-based model for concussion management**.

Download a digital copy at: <https://hawaiiiconcussion.com/reap>



ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENTS COMMONLY USED WHEN RECOVERING FROM A CONCUSSION

- Excuse from physically active classes.
- Wear sunglasses for photo sensitive eyes.
- Provide a quiet area for rest or work.
- Shortened or chunked assignments.
- Allow use of an electronic reader or recorder.
- Assistance from counselor for anxiety and/or depression.
- Attend core classes only.
- Shortened school days.
- Allow student and teacher to have a "signal" when rest is needed.



Hawaii state law requires that educators complete a concussion education course.

Get certified at: <https://hcamp.info/educators>



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Get Schooled on Concussions
<https://www.getschooledonconcussions.com>

HEADS UP to Schools
<https://www.cdc.gov/headsup/schools>