

# Concussion Recognition and Response

*For those with Intellectual Disabilities or Developmental Disabilities*

## What to look for?

1

Bump or hit to the head or body

2

An unusual change in their behavior as noticed through signs (*what you observe*) or symptoms (*what they may feel*)

Encourage everyone to share if they were hit in the head or body **AND** something feels different.

## Considerations

Some people may have trouble identifying changes they feel and telling you about their symptoms.

Concussion symptoms are not unique and can be the same in other developmental or medical disorders.

Current concussion baseline and post-injury tests are unlikely to be as reliable or accurate for those with intellectual disabilities or developmental disabilities.

## What to look for



### Cognitive

*Can they (as well as usual)...*

- Follow directions
- Keep up with your conversations
- Respond quickly to questions
- Find the words they need when speaking
- Problem solve
- Complete tasks without confusion or forgetfulness



### Emotion

*Are they more...*

- Irritable or cranky
- Anxious or worried
- Tearful or sad
- Clingy (acting as they do when they are sick)
- Reactive (having mood swings)



### Physical

*Do they seem...*

- More tired
- To act as if in pain
- More off balance
- To have trouble falling or staying asleep
- To avoid their favorite toys, activities, or electronics
- Bothered more by lights or noises
- To have less appetite

# Protecting Everyone

## Baseline Testing For Individuals With Intellectual Disabilities and Developmental Disabilities

Current computerized baseline testing measures are not recommended for most individuals with intellectual disabilities. These tests should be used only with additional supervision and results should be interpreted with caution for those with developmental disabilities. These tests have specific language demands and require the person to follow multi-step directions. A person is expected to respond quickly at a set pace and pay close attention throughout the test. If utilized incorrectly, baseline testing may contribute to wrong or misleading information, diagnoses, and management steps.

Consider this before the start of the season in a sport or recreational activities...



### Symptom Checklist

A **symptom checklist** completed by the individual and/or caregiver. This will help to identify individualized, meaningful changes to the athlete's functioning after a suspected injury.



### Communication Tools

Know how the individual best communicates and prepare **communication tools** ahead of time to assess symptoms. Consider ASL, braille, and picture boards or other visual aids.



### Education Resources

**Appropriate education materials** for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Get creative and empower the individual to recognize their symptoms and take immediate care steps. Help caregivers know what to look for and where to take their athlete if a concussion is suspected.

## Think it's a concussion?!

- 1 Remove the individual from sport play or physical activity.
- 2 Call the caregiver and notify the health care provider of the suspected injury and any new symptoms.
- 3 Follow medical guidance but approach recovery with a balance of rest and light activity as symptoms allow.
- 4 Slowly return to school, work, and easy physical activity.
- 5 Symptoms getting worse during activities? Take little breaks!
- 6 Remember! No sports or contact activity until symptoms are gone and a healthcare provider says it is safe to return.