

Professional Underwriters

Safe Schools Agenda

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A monthly service provided to help you with your efforts to make your school safe for students, staff and the public

“Warrior Girls” A Must Read

Girls are suffering ACL injuries (which can take as much as a year to recover from) at an alarming rate in soccer games and similar sports. Michael Sokolove, a contributing Editor at the New York Times Magazine, has written “Warrior Girls: Protecting Our Daughters against the Injury Epidemic in Women’s Sports” (Simon & Schuster) to bring this subject to light.

Sokolove claims that Americans demand too much from our athletes, particularly our girls, that we are in love with the idea of the “wounded warrior”...“the warrior girl who fell at the last hurdle or the one who goes on despite some awful injury.” He thinks the benefits of competition (self-confidence, joy in physical strength) are falling by the wayside as girls, especially in team sports like soccer and basketball, adopt the nose-bloodying male model of athletic prowess.

Warrior girls too often specialize in one sport; play year-round; and disregard the effects of puberty on their bodies. The result is high rates of serious injuries, often to vulnerable knees.

Sokolove cites studies showing that young women who play soccer, basketball and volleyball suffer tears to the anterior cruciate ligament (or A.C.L., a flexible, rectangular-shaped band of tissue that stabilizes the knee joint) up to eight times as often as men in the same sports. Female athletes are also prone to concussions – college soccer players suffer as many as men on the football team do – to shin splints, ankle sprains, and to over use injuries such as stress fractures, tendonitis and bursitis. Researchers have found that factors contributing to ACL injuries also include ground hardness, grass type and cleat type.

Sokolove focuses on knees, which he calls “the site of the most dire long-term consequences.” An athlete who ruptures the A.C.L. loses the season, at least. The shredded A.C.L. is replaced in complicated and expensive surgery. Sokolove recites tales of female athletes who have endured multiple A.C.L. tears.



Sokolove warns of the pressure to join private club teams with weekends devoted to year-round out-of-town tournaments. This makes the athletes vulnerable to A.C.L. tears since they are “over use” injuries. He recommends that we discourage girls from playing just one sport year round, and coach them to heed pain, fatigue and seemingly minor discomfort.

Researchers propose that girls build strength in their hips, hamstrings and abs and learn to run and land more like boys: knees bent, crouched low to the ground. A.C.L. injury prevention programs exist but they are seldom used, according to Sokolove. http://sportsmedicine.about.com/od/injuryprevention/a/ACL_prevention.htm lists a program. It calls for training drills that require balance, power and agility. Plyometric exercises such as jumping and balance drills help improve neuromuscular conditioning and muscular reactions and will cut the risk of an ACL injury. Many team physicians now routinely recommend an ACL conditioning program, especially for their female players.

Ask your coaches if your boys and girls sports program includes a plyometric conditioning program. Consider not issuing cleated footwear.

See also: www.Webmd.com



Planning for an Effective Safety Committee

There are seven essential activities of a Safety Committee. How does yours stack up?

1. Begin with management commitment.

It won't survive without it. Management demonstrates support by encouraging employees to get involved in achieving a safe, healthy workplace and by acting on the committee's recommendations.

Representatives demonstrate commitment by attending committee meetings, following through on their assigned tasks, and encouraging other employees to get involved in identifying hazards.

2. Be accountable for achieving its goals.

Each representative shares responsibility for accomplishing safety committee goals which benefits everyone in the school district.

The safety committee is also responsible for monitoring how management holds employees accountable for working safely and for recommending ways to strengthen accountability.

3. Involve employees in achieving its goals.

A safety committee needs help from everyone on the staff. The committee must have a way for employees to report hazards and to offer safety suggestions. Encourage employees to report hazards and unsafe work practices to a safety committee representative. Act on employee suggestions and recognize their contributions to a safer workplace. Promote the committee's activities and accomplishments. Make sure employees know that you are starting a safety committee.

4. Identify workplace hazards.

The safety committee plays an important role in keeping the workplace hazard free. Make sure

that representatives know how to recognize hazards and that they understand basic principles for controlling them. Focus on identifying hazards and unsafe work practices that are likely to cause serious injuries. Conduct thorough workplace inspections at least quarterly. Document hazards and discuss how to control them during regular safety committee meetings. Include employer and employee representatives on the inspection team.

5. Review reports of accidents and near misses.

The committee must establish procedures for investigating workplace accidents, illness, and deaths. The committee should also carefully review accident causes and determine how to control them.

6. Keep accurate records of committee activities.

Keep accurate records of each safety committee meeting as well as committee reports, evaluations, and recommendations. Keep a record of management's response to committee recommendations. Also keep a record of employee safety suggestions and hazard concerns.

7. Evaluate the committee's strengths and weaknesses.

At least once a year schedule a half-day safety committee meeting to identify the committee's achievements of the past 12 months, review essential activities and set goals for the next 12 months.

**HAVE A SAFE AND SUCCESSFUL
SCHOOL YEAR!**