10 Questions to Ask
Youth Sports Organizations about Head Safety

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Parents must do their homework and ask questions about how head safety is handled. At a 2012 youth football Q & A event in Virginia, the commissioner of the NFL, Roger Goodell, was asked by a parent how to be assured of their child’s head safety by the youth sports league. He responded with an excellent question, “How many of you would hire a babysitter without first checking them for safety and quality? You need to do the same with their sports activities.” We encourage parents to ask the following 10 questions, and we encourage all youth sports organizations to properly prepare themselves for these questions.

1. Does the league have a general policy on how it manages concussion?
2. Does the league have access to healthcare professionals with knowledge and training in sports-related concussion?
3. Are coaches required to take a concussion education and training course?
4. Who is responsible for the sideline concussion recognition and response to suspected concussions during practice and games?
5. Do the coaches have readily available tools (concussion signs and symptoms cards, clipboards, fact sheets, smartphone apps, etc.) during practice and games to guide proper recognition and response of a suspected concussion?
6. Does the league provide concussion education for the parents, and what is the policy for informing parents of suspected concussions?
7. Does the league teach/coach proper techniques (e.g., blocking and tackling in football, checking in hockey and lacrosse) in ways that are “head safe” by not putting the head in a position to be struck? If the player does demonstrate unsafe technique during practice or a game, do the coaches re-instruct them with the proper technique/method? Is head and neck strengthening taught?
8. If a contact sport, are there limitations to the amount of contact? How often (# of days per week, # of minutes per practice) do you practice with live contact? Is that any different than past years?
9. How amenable is the league/team/coach to accepting feedback from parents about their child’s safety as it relates to head safety?

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