



**OWHA CONCUSSION AWARENESS RESOURCE**  
**\*\*REQUIRES MANDATORY ANNUAL REVIEW AS A CONDITION OF**  
**MEMBERSHIP/PARTICIPATION\*\***



**A REQUIREMENT BY THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO**

**BACKGROUND**

**ROWAN STRINGER**

In May 2013, 17 year old Rowan Stringer died as a result of a head injury she sustained while playing rugby with her high school team. In the week prior to her final game, Rowan had been hit twice, and likely sustained a concussion each time. These concussions were not recognized, and she continued to play. When she was hit again in her last game, she suffered what is known as Second Impact Syndrome – catastrophic swelling of the brain caused by a second injury that occurs before a previous injury has healed. Rowan collapsed on the field and died four days later in hospital.

A coroner's inquest was convened in 2015 to look into the circumstances of Rowan's death. The coroner's jury made 49 recommendations for how the federal government, as well as Ontario's government ministries, school boards and sports organizations, should improve the manner in which concussions are managed in this province.

**CONCUSSION SAFETY LEGISLATION**

Ontario is the first jurisdiction in Canada to pass concussion safety legislation, setting a precedent for sport legislation across the country. On March 7, 2018, Ontario passed *Rowan's Law (Concussion Safety), 2018* and related amendments to the *Education Act*. This new legislation, which received all-party support, is intended to protect amateur athletes by improving concussion safety on the field and at school.

Rowan's Law Day was proclaimed and the first one held on September 26, 2018. The remaining sections of the legislation will be proclaimed once the regulations have been developed.

Rowan's Law (Concussion Safety), 2018, makes Ontario a national leader in concussion management and prevention by establishing mandatory requirements that call for:

- Annual review of concussion awareness resources that help prevent, identify and manage concussions, which athletes, coaches, educators and parents would be required to review before registering in a sport
- Removal-from-sport and return-to-sport protocols, to ensure that an athlete is immediately removed from sport if they are suspected of having sustained a concussion and giving them the time required to heal properly
- A concussion code of conduct that would set out rules of behaviour to minimize concussions while playing sport.

**ROWAN'S LAW DAY – The Last Wednesday in September**

In honour of the memory of Rowan Stringer, "Rowan's Law Day" is commemorated on the last Wednesday in September to raise awareness about concussions in sport. The first Rowan's Law Day was September 26, 2018.

**KEEPING KIDS SAFE**

Reducing the risk of concussions is always the goal. But concussions happen and knowing what to do – whether you're an athlete, a parent, a coach or a teacher – saves lives.

**OWHA**

The OWHA is the Provincial Sports Organization (PSO) for Female Hockey in the Province of Ontario. The OWHA, its members, participants and others, as referenced in the Act, and as a condition of membership/participation within the OWHA, are bound by the requirements of the Act and of the OWHA.

The OWHA is proud to keep the honour the memory of Rowan Stringer and express sincere thanks to the Stringer family and all those committed to working together to support concussion surveillance, prevention, detection, management and awareness.

## **OWHA MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS OWHA CONCUSSION CODE OF CONDUCT**

### **CONCUSSIONS in SPORT**

A concussion is a common form of head or brain injury that causes changes in how the brain functions, leading to symptoms that can be physical, cognitive or emotional/behavioural. A concussion can occur from a direct or indirect blow to the head or body that causes the brain to move rapidly back and forth within the skull.

Though concussions are common sport injuries, particularly among children and youth, there are sometimes subtle symptoms that may go unnoticed. Without identification and proper management, a concussion has the potential to result in permanent or severe brain damage.

Ontario takes the health and well-being of athletes seriously. Ontarians want to know that amateur athletes are protected by a safe sport system where everyone understands concussions, actively minimizes the risk of concussions, and knows what to do immediately if someone is concussed.

The government is improving concussion safety to create a world class amateur sport system where athletes can participate safely.

The OWHA supports the government in improving concussion safety to create a world class amateur sport system where athletes can participate safely.

### **CONCUSSION CODE OF CONDUCT**

OWHA participants, parents and guardians of athletes who are under 18 years of age, coaches, trainers, officials, bench staff and all named-insured individuals are required to make an annual written commitment and acknowledgement at the time of registration with the OWHA that:

- 1) They have read the age appropriate OWHA Concussion Awareness Resource within the past 3 (three) months and that they:
  - a. Make a commitment to fair play and respect for all;
  - b. Make a commitment to concussion recognition and reporting, including self-reporting of possible concussion and reporting to a designated person when an individual suspects that another individual may have sustained a concussion;
  - c. Make a commitment to following and supporting the Hockey Canada return-to-sport process;
  - d. Make a commitment to sharing any pertinent information regarding incidents of a removal from sport with the athlete's school and any other sport organization with which the athlete has registered;
  - e. Coaches and trainers are required to make a commitment to providing opportunities before and after each training, practice and competition to enable athletes to discuss potential issues related to concussions;
  - f. Make a commitment to zero-tolerance for prohibited play that is considered high-risk for causing concussions;
  - g. Acknowledgement of mandatory expulsion from competition for violating zero-tolerance for prohibited play that is considered high-risk for causing concussions;
  - h. Acknowledgement of escalating consequences for those who repeatedly violate the concussion code of conduct.
  - i. The OWHA/Hockey Canada Injury Report form and the Concussion Follow Up and Communication Form must be completed in a timely manner and submitted to the OWHA within the required time frame.

### **PRE-SEASON MEETING**

It is the strong recommendation of the OWHA that all OWHA teams hold a pre-season meeting with players, parents and staff in attendance. An important item on the agenda is concussion education to re-enforce the OWHA Concussion Awareness Guide and to discuss responsibilities and communication channels within the team.

## **PERSONAL INFORMATION**

The following rules apply with respect to personal information collected in the course of the OWHA and its members carrying out the OWHA's removal-from-sport and return-to-sport protocols:

A team/association must limit the collection, use and disclosure of personal information to that which is reasonably necessary for the purpose of carrying out the removal-from-sport and return-to-sport protocols.

A team/association shall limit access to such personal information to only those individuals who require it for the purpose of fulfilling their duties or obligations under the Act.

A team/association shall retain, disclose and dispose of such personal information in a secure manner.

The team/association shall ensure an OWHA injury report form is completed and sent to the OWHA office each time a participant has suffered a suspected concussion. The team/association shall ensure that its documents are managed in accordance with its retention policy for personal information.

"personal information" has the same meaning as in section 2 of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

## **REMOVAL FROM PLAY PROTOCOL**

The OWHA believes that the safety and health of hockey players is of paramount importance.

When an individual has suffered a suspected concussion, regardless of whether or not the concussion was sustained or is suspected of having been sustained during a sport activity associated with the OWHA, the following steps must be taken:

- Any hockey player who suffers a suspected concussion must stop participation in the hockey activity immediately. If there is doubt as to whether a concussion has occurred, it is to be assumed that it has.
- If an athlete is suspected of having sustained a concussion, the protocol must require a designated person to call 9-1-1 if, in the designated person's opinion, doing so is necessary.
- The OWHA team/association must require make and keep records of all incidences where an athlete is removed from further training, practice or competition because they are suspected of having sustained a concussion. These must be reported to the OWHA on the OWHA/Hockey Canada injury form.
- When a designated person informs an athlete or, if the athlete is under 18 years of age, the athlete's parent or guardian that the athlete has been removed from further training, practice or competition, the protocol must require a designated person to advise the athlete or the parent or guardian that the athlete is required to undergo a medical assessment by a physician or a nurse practitioner before the athlete will be permitted to return to training, practice or competition in accordance with the sport organization's return-to-sport protocol.
- The designated person must give the athlete or, if the athlete is under 18 years of age, the athlete's parent or guardian a copy of the sport organization's removal-from-sport and return-to-sport protocol when the athlete is removed from further practice, training or competition.
- The designated person must inform an athlete who has been diagnosed as having a concussion or, if the athlete is under 18 years of age, the athlete's parent or guardian of the importance of disclosing the diagnosis to any other sport organization with which the athlete is registered or school that the athlete attends.
- The team/association must make a record of the athlete's progression through the graduated return-to-sport steps up until the time the athlete is fully cleared to return to play.
- A designated person may rely on the information received from an athlete or, if the athlete is under 18 years of age, from the athlete's parent or guardian in carrying out the designated person's responsibilities under a sport organization's return-to-sport protocol if it was not conducted under the supervision of the hockey team/association.
- When a player is diagnosed by a medical doctor as having a concussion, the individual must stop participation in all hockey activities immediately.
- The participant is not permitted to return to any hockey activity until written permission is given by a medical doctor or nurse practitioner.
- Return to full participation shall follow the adopted Hockey Canada Safety Program return to play guidelines.