

## NEWS

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**For Immediate Release:**

July 20, 2011

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### **NOCSAE, CDC team up to give “Heads Up to Parents” about concussions in youth sports**

**OVERLAND PARK, KS., July 20, 2011** – The National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are teaming up to launch “Heads Up to Parents,” a new educational initiative designed specifically to provide parents with the facts about how to protect, prevent and respond to youth and high school athlete concussions. The partnership, made possible by a grant from NOCSAE to the CDC Foundation, builds on the CDC’s successful “Heads Up” initiative featuring free tools for coaches, athletes, parents and healthcare professionals that provide important information on preventing, recognizing and responding to a concussion.

NOCSAE is an independent and nonprofit standard-setting body with the sole mission of enhancing athletic safety through scientific research and the creation of performance standards for protective equipment.

“Forty-five million kids and teens participate in organized youth sports each year. Parents, who know their young athletes best, are on the front line to identify concussion risks, injuries and help prevent long-term health problems,” said Mike Oliver, executive director of NOCSAE. “Working with the CDC, we will help make sure parents get the facts they need quickly and easily to better protect athletes.”

The CDC estimates approximately 1.6 to 3.8 million sports- and recreation-related concussions occur each year in the United States, and children and teens are at highest risk.

“The CDC is working on a series of projects focused on preventing and reducing the long-term impact of sports-related head injuries. Public-private partnerships, such as this one supported by the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment, are helping the CDC get important, science-based messages out to parents, athletes, coaches and partners,” said Charles Stokes, president and CEO of the CDC

Foundation. “We are proud to be able to connect the CDC with NOCSAE to help parents get the facts about concussion in sports, and we thank NOCSAE for their support of this important program.”

“Heads Up to Parents” will take advantage of the growing social media presence of the “Heads Up” initiatives, as well as existing CDC platforms and educational channels. A “Heads Up to Parents” micro website made especially for parents will house educational content, such as videos and downloadable resources.

Educational print materials will be developed to address key issues parents need to know about concussion prevention, recognition and response, as well as helmet safety (such as how to properly fit a helmet) that will be distributed through helmet check programs and activities. The program aims to present parents and athletes with concussion information before the start of the first practice.

"Parents play a key role in recognizing and responding to concussions. To keep young athletes safe, parents can follow the CDC's "Heads Up" four-step action plan. If the athlete has experienced a bump or blow to the head or body, remove the athlete from play. Since a concussion can't be seen, learning to identify concussion symptoms and danger signs can help to keep your child safe. Parents should seek the care of a healthcare professional experienced in evaluating for concussion and only allow their children to return to play when a healthcare professional says the athlete is free of symptoms and is ok to play," says Richard C. Hunt, MD, FACEP, director of the Division of Injury Response, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control.

"Parents, when in doubt, keep the athlete out of play," Dr. Hunt adds. "It's better to miss one game than the whole season."

Bob and Lisa Gfeller established the Matthew Allan Gfeller Foundation in memory of their 15-year-old son who died after suffering a traumatic brain injury during a varsity football game in August 2008. The foundation supports the role athletics can play in the lives of children, but believes that head injuries can be minimized through better equipment, training, diagnosis and early treatment.

"The partnership between NOCSAE and the CDC named 'Heads up for Parents' is a breakthrough idea for parents of student athletes all over the United States. Like so many parents, I never dreamed that our son was at risk of losing his life on the football field. I can't overstate how important it is for parents to educate themselves and their young athletes about the risk of head injuries and how to protect against, diagnose and treat them. That is the mission of the Matthew Gfeller Foundation – to help parents prevent, recognize and treat youth sports head injuries. I commend NOCSAE and the CDC for their efforts. This new campaign will help us reach even more parents to better protect young athletes," said Bob Gfeller, the father of Matthew and spokesperson for the Matthew Gfeller Foundation."

"Heads Up to Parents" materials will begin to be available at the start of the school year. Free, downloadable CDC resources about concussion recognition, response and prevention can be found at [www.cdc.gov/concussion/sports/](http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/sports/).

The partnership with the CDC builds on NOCSAE's ongoing efforts to protect athletes. Formed in 1969, NOCSAE is a leading force in the effort to improve athletic equipment and, as a result, reduce injuries. Based on the best available science, NOCSAE has established the most rigorous standards for football helmet performance. However, no football helmet can prevent all concussions.

NOCSAE is the leading nongovernmental source for research funding in all sports medicine and science related to concussion. Since 2000, NOCSAE has invested more than \$3 million toward understanding sport-related concussions and supporting research by the foremost experts in sports medicine and science to develop and advance athlete safety.



"Commissioning research and establishing standards for athletic equipment, where feasible, and encouraging dissemination of research findings on athletic equipment and sports injuries."

**The National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment**

**About NOCSAE**

*NOCSAE, the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment, is an independent and nonprofit standard-setting body with the sole mission to enhance athletic safety through scientific research and the creation of performance standards for protective equipment. Formed in 1969, NOCSAE is a leading force in the effort to improve athletic equipment and, as a result, reduce injuries. NOCSAE efforts include the development of performance and test standards for football helmets and facemasks, baseball and softball batters and catchers helmets, baseballs and softballs, ice hockey helmets, soccer shin guards, lacrosse helmets and facemasks and polo helmets. NOCSAE is comprised of representatives from a number of groups which have an interest in athletic equipment – including manufacturers, reconditioners, athletic trainers, coaches, equipment managers, sports medicine and consumer organizations. These diverse interests have joined forces in an attempt to arrive at a common goal of reducing sports-related injuries. NOCSAE is a nonprofit, charitable organization supported by individuals and organizations with an interest in athletics.*

**About the CDC Foundation**

*Established by Congress, the CDC Foundation helps the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) do more, faster, by forging effective partnerships between CDC and corporations, foundations, organizations and individuals to fight threats to health and safety. The CDC Foundation manages approximately 200 programs in the United States and in countries around the world. For more information, please visit [www.cdcfoundation.org](http://www.cdcfoundation.org).*