



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

NURTURING THE POTENTIAL OF ALL KIDS

**Parent Handbook
YOUTH PROGRAMS**



Whatcom Family YMCA

1256 N. State Street, Bellingham, WA 98225
360 733 8630 www.whatcomymca.org

WELCOME TO THE YMCA!

We are pleased that you have chosen to enroll your child in a Y program! We are confident that your child will learn, grow, and develop in our environment designed especially for children.

Parent and caregiver engagement is the shared responsibility between the Y and the communities we serve. Together, we foster meaningful opportunities that support the positive cognitive, physical, and social-emotional growth that children experience from birth to career; nourishing their need to be loved, spiritually grounded, educated, competent, and healthy.

At the Y, we empower parents and caregivers to be equal partners in decisions that affect their children and provide opportunities for them to support a strong sense of achievement, relationships, and belonging.

This handbook has been created as a reference to guide you through the workings of our Y. Please read the contents carefully and keep the handbook for future referral. Your familiarity with the following information will help to enrich your child's experiences during the Y program. We are always happy to answer any questions that you might have.

Non-Discrimination Policy

It is the policy of the YMCA that no person shall be subjected to discrimination because of race, color, national origin, gender, sex, sexual orientation, age, class, religion, creed, marital status, disabled or Vietnam Era Veteran status, or the presence of any physical, mental or sensory handicap.

Our Mission

The Whatcom Family YMCA is an association of individuals with shared values which enhance the community with programs for the spirit, mind and body.

Our Areas of Focus

The Y is a cause-driven organization that is for youth development, for healthy living and for social responsibility. That's because a strong community can only be achieved when we invest in our kids, our health and our neighbors.

Our three areas of focus are:

- **Youth Development:** Nurturing the potential of every child and teen.
- **Healthy Living:** Improving the community's health and well-being.
- **Social Responsibility:** Giving back and providing support to our neighbors.

All programs at the Whatcom Family YMCA are committed to a value-based development curriculum. Helping children understand and practice the YMCA's core values, caring, respect, honesty and responsibility, is central in our programs.

Annual Fundraising Campaign

Every year the Y focuses on the Annual Community Support Campaign. Money raised during this campaign allows us to provide scholarships for families in need of financial assistance to participate in YMCA programs. Please contact your Director if you are interested in participating in this exciting fundraising event.

PROGRAM POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Holidays, Closures, and Religious Activity

The YMCA closes on the following holidays: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. Most programs factor in these closings and adjust program dates accordingly.

The YMCA is a Christian based organization. When our programs are located in a facility other than a public school, we reserve the right to acknowledge and celebrate religious holidays. We do respect each family's choice to follow a different faith and value the culture that each family brings into our program. While we cannot exclude a child from the rest of the group during an activity, we can work with you to provide an alternative activity. Please talk with the program director, or the program supervisor to arrange a time to share how your family celebrates!

Inclement Weather Closures

We strive to stay open, as long as possible, when severe weather affects our community. However, the safety of our children, families, and staff is also imperative. If we feel the safety of our participants and staff is at risk, we reserve the right to close our programs. That communication will be made to our parents as soon as possible through social media, email, KGMI radio, and if possible, phone calls.

Registration & Refunds

Participants may register for programs at the Welcome Desk. Online and telephone registrations are accepted with payment by Visa/MasterCard/American Express for current members and program members.

Program refund policy

Program refunds will not be granted once a program session begins. If a participant needs to cancel, a two week notice needs to be given to the program director for a refund minus a \$5 administrative fee, to be returned in the original form of payment. No refunds will be granted after the 2 week notice unless authorized by the program director, we will gladly provide a prorated YMCA credit to a person's account after a program begins, due to illness or injury if authorized by the program director (valid for one year from issue date). There will be a \$5 administrative fee for all refunds/credits. The YMCA is founded on Christian principles and prohibits inappropriate behavior and conduct.

Volunteering

Many of our Youth Programs rely on volunteers, including Parent Volunteers, to operate. If you are interested in volunteering with your child's program, we do ask that you go through the same steps all our volunteers are required to complete. In addition to a background check, these requirements are considered best practice to keep all our children safe:

1. Fill out Volunteer Application found on our website.
2. Provide references through our electronic reference check company – Harver
3. Complete required Child Abuse Prevention on-line training

Personal Belongings

Please clearly mark all items such as clothing, water bottles, and backpacks with your child's name. Toys from home can be a distraction to the program. Unless it is a designated sharing time, please do not send toys from home with your child. Please do not send money, wheeled shoes, video games, or any other valuable items. The YMCA cannot be held responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged items. We will attempt to contact the owner of lost and found items that are marked, but as the amount of items grows, it is transferred to the desk at the Downtown YMCA. It stays there for one week, and then is donated to a worthy cause.

YOUTH PROTECTION

Staff and Volunteers

The Whatcom Family YMCA hires staff based on their ability to relate to the perspective of children. Staff are selected for their personal qualities of warmth, empathy and ability to relate positively to others. We provide training for our staff through daily direction, staff meetings and approved trainings.

In addition, we require the following for paid staff:

- Criminal History Background check
- Infant/Child CPR and First Aid training
- Blood-borne pathogens training
- Annual Child Abuse Prevention Training

The Whatcom Family YMCA values community support in the form of volunteerism. All volunteers must have a cleared criminal background check, annual Child Abuse Prevention Training and an orientation to the program.

Youth Building Guidelines

Children age 11 and under must be in direct supervision of an adult at all times OR be in YMCA supervised activity. This includes the use of locker rooms and bathrooms.

Youth/Parent Class Drop-off & Pick-up Policy

Children 11 and under registered for any YMCA class/program must be dropped off and picked up directly in the program area. Parents must escort children to the specific part of the building or field that the program is taking place. The only exception to this, is if the child is attending a program at the school they attend immediately after school is released.

Photo ID Policy

Anyone 16 years and older is required to show photo ID when entering our facilities. We require a parent or designated adult to sign in and/or out of a program in order for their child(ren) to participate. Adults will be required to present photo ID and the Y will only release to persons designated as an authorized pick up. That person must be at least 16 years of age or older.

Leaving Children/Siblings in Unattended Vehicles

Our goal is to keep children as safe as possible. Because we're in a busy part of the city with busy streets, we remind you not to leave children unattended in vehicles while you go inside to pick up a sibling. It's not possible to see your child from the inside of the building and without your supervision there are large safety concerns, no matter what age your children are.

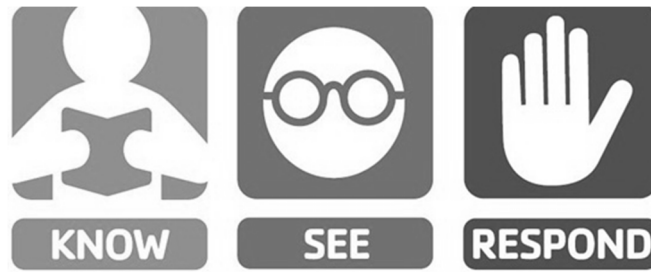
Security Access at the Welcome Desk

The safety of our children in the building is of utmost importance to us. All parents and approved pick-ups will be required to check in or scan their membership card at the desk before proceeding to the program area. Emergency contacts and occasional pick-ups will need to show their photo identification at the desk and in the program area in order to pick up your child.

When filling out program registration, please make sure you include all approved adults for pick-up.

Child Abuse Prevention: Know, See, and Respond

At the Whatcom Family YMCA, we practice three important habits of Child Abuse Prevention – **KNOW**, **SEE** and **RESPOND** – to create safe spaces where youth can learn, grow and thrive. When we **KNOW** how abuse happens, **SEE** the warning signs and **RESPOND** quickly to prevent it, together we foster a culture of child abuse prevention.



We **KNOW** when we understand the behaviors of those who harm youth and how to stop them. Staff and volunteers who practice the **KNOW** habit:

- Understand the potential risks for abuse that children and teens face, and their role in protecting them at their Y.
- Understand how predators operate
- Recognize the importance of proactive engagement when supervising youth, and between youth
- Appreciate the difference they make when they practice the Three Habits in Child Abuse Prevention at their Y
- Encourage others to adopt these prevention habits
- Can explain what Know, See and Respond means when asked by a parent or community member

We **SEE** when we can recognize warning signs or behaviors that signal abuse or a risk for abuse. Staff and volunteers who practice the **SEE** habit:

- Interrupt inappropriate interactions between adults and youth, and between youth
- Respect children and teen’s emotional, psychological and physical boundaries – according to YMCA policies – and ensure that others also follow the policies
- Act when something seems wrong and if they observe others not practicing the prevention habits

We **RESPOND** when we take action to stop behaviors we recognize as being inappropriate or questionable. Staff and volunteers who practice the **RESPOND** habit:

- Act when children or others need help
- Interrupt questionable behavior by a staff member, volunteer or youth
- Notify the appropriate people at the Y when they have a concern
- Can make a report to Child Protective Services and/or police when they suspect abuse

If you have any questions about our Child Abuse Prevention practices or Know, See, and Respond, please feel free to contact Lynda Purdie at (360) 733-8630 ex. 1106.

Child Abuse Prevention Policies

The following are the Child Abuse Prevention Policies that we ask all our staff and volunteers to follow. Any violation of these policies is a Red Flag and should be reported as soon as possible.

General Guidelines:

- All staff and volunteers will be easily identified by wearing YMCA issued name tags and/or Staff T-shirts.
- Youth 11 years old and under must be in direct supervision of a supervising individual at all times.
- Rooms that allow for unnecessary privacy or limit line-of-sight supervision will remain locked or will be routinely checked by staff.
- The organization has **zero tolerance** for abuse, mistreatment, or sexual activity among youth within the organization. This organization is committed to providing all youth with a safe environment and will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one youth by another youth. Conduct by youth that rises to the level of abuse, mistreatment, or sexual activity will result in intervention or disciplinary action, up to and including, dismissal from the program.
- In addition, our organization will not tolerate any behavior that is classified under the definition of bullying, and to the extent that such actions are disruptive, the organization will take the necessary steps to eliminate such behavior.
- All staff and volunteers will be aware of the Member Code of Conduct

Working with Children Guidelines:

- You will avoid being alone with a single child, unless you are supervising your own child.
- In the rare occasion that you are forced to be in a situation where you are one-on-one with a child, you must follow the following guidelines:
 - Notify other employees or volunteers that you are alone with a child.
 - Remain in full view of others and if a room, leave the door open.
 - Ensure physical and verbal interactions align with our established policies and are limited to the task at hand.
 - Document and immediately report any unusual incidents, including disclosures of abuse or maltreatment, behavior problems and how they were handled, injuries, or any interactions that might be misinterpreted.
- Staff and volunteers must not develop a one on one relationship or have one on one contact with children who participate in YMCA programs outside of approved YMCA activities without the advanced written approval of your supervisor or volunteer coordinator; for example, babysitting, weekend trips, foster care, etc. are not permitted. Prior relationships with participants will be documented and brought to the attention of the supervisor or volunteer coordinator and/or CEO.
- Dating a program participant under age 18 is not allowed.
- Staff and volunteers may not transport youth participants to and from YMCA activities/programs in their own vehicles, unless they are your own child or family member, without prior written approval from your supervisor/CEO or volunteer coordinator.
- Giving gifts to children in Y programs is not allowed.
- Children shall not be disciplined by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care in any circumstance.
- Employees and volunteers are prohibited from speaking to consumers in a way that is, or could be construed by any observer, as harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. Employees or volunteers must not initiate sexually oriented conversations, or discuss their own sexual activities with participants. Discussions in front of children should never include content regarding the personal life of staff, volunteers or other program participants.

- All physical contact between staff or volunteers and youth will promote a positive, nurturing environment while protecting consumers, employees and volunteers, and will be defined according to the age group. Staff and volunteers are expected to respect children’s wishes and boundaries with regard to any physical contact.
 - Children have the right to say “no” to physical contact unless such contact is related to the child’s physical, health and safety or safety of other participants.
 - Affection shown should never be done in isolated areas where staff or volunteers are not visible to other adults
 - Other than diapering, children are not to be touched in areas of their bodies that would be covered by a bathing suit.
 - In addition, children must be informed in a manner that is age appropriate to the group, of their right to set their own “touching” limits.

Any inappropriate physical contact by employees or volunteers towards children in our programs will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Social Media Guidelines:

- Any private electronic communication between staff or volunteers and youth under the age of 18, including the use of social networks, i.e. Facebook, Snapchat, texting and messaging is prohibited. All forms of electronic communication must be copied to the staff’s supervisor, the volunteer’s coordinator and parent of the youth.
- Communication through “organization group pages” on Facebook or any other approved forums is the only acceptable form of interaction with youth through social media.
- Staff and volunteers are not allowed to take photos of, or keep, or share pictures of youth participants on their personal devices.
- Staff and volunteers are prohibited from possessing or viewing inappropriate information or pornography on the organization’s property or equipment. This includes any messages, communications or materials that are sexually oriented or those that depict pornography or nudity.
- Staff and volunteers will use best efforts to prevent all youth and teen program participants from taking pictures or videos of other youth in the facilities and/or program areas.

Program Guidelines:

- Youths will be greeted when entering the facility and directed to their structured activity or authorized area.
- Youth will be signed in to programs by parent or staff/volunteer Youth will be signed out by a parent/guardian, or those authorized by the parent/guardian only. Anyone signing out a child from a program must be at least 16 years old. Programs required to implement this sign out procedure are, but not limited to, child care, day camps, Girls on the Run and Trailblazers and swim team participants 11 years and younger.
- Some program areas are closed to public access and those areas will be monitored by staff and volunteers to prevent unauthorized entry and/or observation.
- All youth guidelines are considered part of the Child Abuse Prevention Policy.
- No youth will be permitted to attend a YMCA program or activity without a current Registration, Emergency, Consent (REC) form or program roster on file in the office and possession of the staff supervising the program. Activities open to the public are the exception to this policy.
- Each program area is responsible for establishing specific guidelines for additional monitoring and supervision of activities that involve youth from different age groups. Close line of sight is essential and required for programs serving mixed- age groups.
- All programs will have policies specific to use of facility bathrooms and locker rooms, transitions, playground monitoring, transportation, field trips and overnight activities.

Grievance Policy

The Y believes children and parents/guardians have valuable thoughts and insights to share regarding our operations. Accordingly, the Y encourages consumers and parents/guardians to share opinions, suggestions, concerns, questions and/or grievances about our policies, personnel, and/or other matters impacting the Y and its programs.

In general, the best person initially to bring opinions, suggestions, concerns, and/or questions to is the Program Director/Coordinator. However, to the extent the concerns relate to the Program Director/Coordinator, or to the extent a child or parent/guardian believes the Program Director/Coordinator did not fully address a matter, children and parents/guardians may direct their opinions, suggestions, concerns, and/or questions to the next level of management or directly to Bill Ziels, CEO or Lynda Purdie, Human Resource Director.

To remedy concerns that appear to have been ignored or unresolved after initial reporting, utilize this formal grievance procedure. This procedure provides for a timely, thorough and objective investigation of the following concerns:

- ___ Inappropriate Behavior by Employees/Volunteers;
- ___ Inappropriate Behavior by Children;
- ___ Retaliation; and/or;
- ___ Whistleblower complaints.

Written Complaint Required for Formal Process:

Verbal complaints are encouraged, particularly for issues that may be easily and expeditiously resolved, but a written complaint is required to initiate this grievance process.

To ensure a timely and effective response, complaints should include the following information to the extent possible:

- 1) The name(s) of individuals(s) involved;
- 2) The date(s) the behavior occurred;
- 3) The name(s) of any known witness(es);
- 4) A summary of the conduct meriting the grievance including:
 - a. The behavior complained of and/or the alleged policy or legal violation(s);
 - b. Direct quotes when relevant and available; and
 - c. Any relevant documentation.
- 5) The remedy sought by the employee making the complaint.

Timeline:

Children or parents/guardians who themselves have a complaint or who are aware of behavior meriting a complaint, must provide the above described written complaint via email to the CEO- Bill Ziels: bziels@whatcomymca.org within 5-10 business days. The CEO, or Human Resource Director will meet with the child or parent/guardian to hear their concern and attempt to resolve the complaint within 10-15 days.

Following that meeting, the CEO or Human Resource Director will provide a brief written response to the child or parent/guardian who brought the complaint no later than 10-15 days that includes brief written findings on the issues raised and relief sought.

If the child or parent/guardian is not satisfied with the written response, the individual who brought the complaint may submit an appeal to Y's Youth Protection Board Committee no later than 10-15 days after final letter is received. The committee, will meet with the consumer or parent/guardian to hear their concern and attempt to resolve the complaint within 30 days.

Following that meeting, the committee will provide a written response to the child or parent/guardian who brought the complaint no later than 30 days that includes brief written findings on the issues raised and relief sought.

The Y's Youth Protection Board Committee is the final arbiter of grievance matters at this organization.

Investigation:

The CEO, Human Resource Director and/or Y's Youth Protection Board Committee will thoroughly investigate the issues raised in the grievance and will protect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties involved to the extent possible by law. All parties must cooperate with the investigation.

If the organization determines a violation of policy or law has occurred, the organization will take appropriate action, up to and including termination and notification of external authorities.

Retaliation:

This organization strictly prohibits retaliation against children and/or parents/guardians for reporting, filing, testifying, assisting or participating in any manner in any investigation, proceeding or hearing conducted by the organization or a federal or state law enforcement agency or court. Children and/or parents/guardians should report any suspected retaliation to the CEO, Human Resource Director and/or Y's Youth Protection Board Committee immediately after becoming aware of it. Any report of retaliatory conduct will be objectively, timely and thoroughly investigated. If a report of retaliation is found to be valid, the organization will take appropriate remedial action, up to and including discharging the individual(s) responsible. This organization will not retaliate against any child or parent/guardian for raising a complaint and will not knowingly permit retaliation by management or other employees.

Behavior Guidance in Young Children

Young children are learning how to be in charge of their own behavior and emotions. This is a big learning experience for children, which requires staff and volunteers who respond to inappropriate behaviors with insight, sensitivity, consistency, and reflection. Most of our boundaries center around three basic principles: children may not hurt themselves, hurt others or destroy property. It is essential for children to understand why the behavior is inappropriate and how to modify it (once developmentally appropriate). Furthermore, it's imperative for children to understand that while they may have made a poor decision, it doesn't make them a "bad child".

Prevention Strategies:

Most behaviors can be prevented with some of these simple strategies listed below:

- Establishing clear, consistent, age-appropriate boundaries
- Considering the age, individual temperament and developmental level of each child.
- Arranging the program to help children understand behavior expectations
- Adults acting as positive roles models for positive behavior and conflict resolution
- Close observation and supervision of all children
- Specific, positive praise when children are making good choices
- Redirecting children to another activity when having a difficult time working within program boundaries.
- Establishing a consistent routine and transitions so children can know what to expect

Responding to Negative Behaviors:

If a child is not responding to verbal warnings and is still displaying negative behaviors, we often use one of the strategies below:

- Having a short discussion with the child, privately, getting down on their level and using a calm voice
- Helping children verbalize their feelings and frustrations to the staff and/or peers.
- Practicing and role-playing common behavior scenarios
- Working with 1-3 children at a time on solving a problem by asking guiding questions
- Using logical consequences to teach children that each action they display has a reaction
- Loss of privileges, usually closely related to the inappropriate behavior
- Taking space away in a quiet area to calm down (not a time out)

Prohibited:

The behaviors listed below are prohibited in our program and may not be used under any circumstance:

- Withholding of food, or bathroom privileges as a behavior management tool.
- Corporal/physical punishment of any kind
- Shaming, humiliation, or "making an example" out of any child
- Sarcasm
- Abusive or profane language

Behavior Contracts and Communication with Families:

We believe that parents are our partners in their child's experience and we want to inform them when their child is having trouble making good choices. Communication with families is critical in building rapport. This can be done using daily reports and/or letters and phone calls home. If a child continues to struggle with a behavior or the behavior is extremely unsafe, we often will set up a conference with the parent(s) and discuss options for the future. Options for ongoing behavior challenges may include behavior plans, reward charts to earn special privileges, and sometimes in extreme situations removal from the program.

Photographs

The Y may take photographs for promotional use. If you do not wish for your child to be photographed for either of these purposes, please let the Program Director know in writing.

Since there are children who shouldn't have their photo taken, we do ask that parents/guardians refrain from taking photos or videos of their children at events that would include other children in the photo.

Difficult Family Times

Sometimes families go through painful times. It is important to have clear guidelines about how these difficulties will be handled in the program. Hopefully, this will allow us all to be effective in our respective roles in caring for children and families.

1. The program is a neutral place. Staff, parents, and children need to know they are in a safe and non-judgmental space.
2. All parental rights will be recognized by the program unless a No-Contact Order is produced.
3. Parents are always welcome to spend time with their children at the program. However, this is not an appropriate place for "visitation" by a non-custodial parent.
4. Indication that a parent is under the influence of alcohol or other drugs will result in a staff asking that another, capable adult be called to pick up the child.
5. Adults who raise their voices or act in a way that is frightening or threatening to a staff, volunteer or child will be asked to remove themselves from the program.

Our primary priority is the safety and well-being of the children in our care. We also hope to be supportive of all parents and strive to create a space where the entire family can feel safe, encouraged, and engaged in the learning process.

Health Policies

Children will not be admitted to programs when they are ill. You are the best judge of your child's health, and we trust that you will not bring a sick child to the program. However, if in the opinion of the program staff your child is sick, we will call you, or ask you to pick up your child. If we are unable to reach you, we will call the emergency contact person on your registration form. In addition, if your child was sent home due to illness, **he/she cannot return to the program until he/she is free from symptoms for 24 hours.**

Here are some general guidelines about when a child should be kept at home:

- If you have given your child Tylenol or Ibuprofen before coming to the center.
- If your child is irritable, continuously crying or requires more attention than we are able to provide.
- If your child had runny diarrhea or vomited at home or on the way to the program. Please note: A child will be sent home if he/she vomits while at the program.

We know that it is disappointing for your child to miss a day of programming. However, bringing a sick child to the program assures that other children will become sick, as well as program staff. Keeping sick children home is a win-win situation for all involved.

Injuries

If your child is injured while in our care, staff will do the following:

1. Minor injuries: Apply first aid and complete an "Ouch Report".
2. More serious injuries: Apply first aid as necessary, attempt to reach the parent/guardian or others listed on the Emergency Information Form to discuss further action taken. Complete an accident report.
3. If we cannot reach the parent/guardian, or other designated people, and the staff feels the situation warrants it, 911 will be called.

Concussion in Youth Sports: A Fact Sheet for Parents

What is a Concussion?

A concussion is a brain injury. Concussions are caused by a bump or blow to the head. Even a "ding/" "getting your bell rung," or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious. You can't see a concussion. Signs and symptoms of concussion can show up right after the injury or may not appear or be noticed until days or weeks after the injury. If your child reports any symptoms of concussion, or if you notice the symptoms yourself, seek medical attention right away.

Signs and Symptoms of a Concussion:

Signs Observed by Parents or Guardians:

If your child has experienced a bump or blow to the head during a game or practice, look for any of the following signs and symptoms of a concussion:

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets an instruction
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows behavior or personality changes
- Can't recall events prior to hit or fall
- Can't recall events after hit or fall

Symptoms Reported by Athlete:

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Does not "feel right"

Help Your Child Prevent a Concussion:

Every sport is different, but there are steps your children can take to protect themselves from concussion.

- Ensure that they follow their coach's rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
- Encourage them to practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- Make sure they wear the right protective equipment for their activity (such as helmets, padding, shin guards, and eye and mouth guards). Protective equipment should fit properly, be well maintained, and be worn consistently and correctly.
- Learn the signs and symptoms of a concussion.

You Think Your Child Has a Concussion:

1. Seek medical attention right away. A health care professional will be able to decide how serious the concussion is and when it is safe for your child to return to sports.
2. Keep your child out of play. Concussions take time to heal. Don't let your child return to play until a health care professional says it's OK. Children who return to play too soon—while the brain is still healing—risk a greater chance of having a second concussion. Second or later concussions can be very serious. They can cause permanent brain damage, affecting your child for a lifetime.
3. Tell your child's coach about any recent concussion. Coaches should know if your child had a recent concussion in ANY sport. Your child's coach may not know about a concussion your child received in another sport or activity unless you tell the coach.

It's better to miss one game than the whole season.