



## Nurses in Unique Position to Improve Concussion Awareness

National concern about concussions has grown in recent years as more research has shown the significant immediate and long-term effects of these injuries. “We now know that it does not take loss of consciousness to have a severe head injury,” said Cindy Galemore, MSEd, BSN, RN, NCSN, Director of Health Services at Olathe District Schools in Olathe, Kan.

To help raise awareness of proper concussion management, states across the country are taking the lead on the push for youth sports concussion legislation. In fact, more than half of all U.S. states have adopted some sort of student-athlete concussion law, and five other states have youth concussion bills pending. Roughly 20 states passed their youth concussion laws in 2011 alone.

In July 2011, Kansas enacted a new state law to help strengthen the rules regarding the safety of those suspected of having a concussion. The law, which includes the School Sports Head Injury Prevention Act, requires the School Activities Association to compile information about the nature and risk of concussions and head injuries from sports and other activities. Coaches, parents and athletes in the state of Kansas must receive the information about concussions prior to any student’s participation in athletics.

“There are many different groups in the school setting that could benefit from more education and training in concussion awareness,” said Galemore. “School nurses in particular can be key advocates for concussion awareness and help schools attain the necessary resources and education to manage student concussion injuries.”

In accordance with the Kansas law, any student participating in athletics or sports must have a Concussion and Head Injury Information Release Form signed by both a parent/guardian and the student. The form must be on file before the student participates in their first practice of the school year.

Immediate removal from play is also required for any athlete that suffers or is suspected of sustaining a concussion during competition or practices. The student may return to competition or practice after being evaluated and receiving written clearance from a healthcare professional.

For more information, be sure to check out the Kansas State High School Activities Association concussion guidelines and educational resources at [www.kshsaa.org](http://www.kshsaa.org).