

Risk Management – Minimum Standard of Care for Interschool Athletics

Administrative Procedure

Status:	Active
Effective:	June 2016
Revision Date:	October 2025
Review Date:	October 2029
Responsibility:	Superintendent of Education (School Programs)

INTENDED PURPOSE:

The Halton District School Board is committed to the safety of all students while participating in interschool athletics (try-outs, practices, competitions, tournaments) both on and off school sites as part of an HDSB co-curricular program.

To minimize the risk to students, staff and volunteers participating in physical activities, we adhere to the minimum standard set forth annually through the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education (OPASSE) in the Curricular, Intramural and Interschool Modules (Elementary and Secondary), as well as the HDSB Localized Minimum Standards (Elementary and Secondary) and all cross referenced HDSB Administrative Procedures.

PROCEDURES:

1. Risk Management:

The following elements of risk must be taken into consideration by the teacher, coach and/or coach liaison:

- age-appropriateness for the students'/athletes' physical/mental abilities and behavioural patterns
- knowledge and experience, and additional qualifications and First Aid required of coach/ coach liaisons in accordance with the HDSB Localized Minimum Standards and OPASSE (activity specific pages)
- appropriate supervision of activity as outlined in the HDSB Localized Minimum Standards and OPASSE (activity specific pages) as well as in the cross referenced HDSB Administrative Procedures
- environmental conditions (e.g., lightning, extreme temperatures, high winds, tornadoes, inclement weather and transportation) in terms of site appropriateness and/or cancellation/postponement
- safety standards required of each interschool sport/activity at the elementary and/or secondary interschool level, which are reviewed and updated annually. Specifically,

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they include information on:

- equipment
- clothing, footwear and jewellery
- facilities
- environmental considerations
- special rules and instructions
- supervision
- qualifications
- First Aid
- definitions

Each school must appoint an Administrator or Designate (e.g. Health and Physical Education Department Head, Athletic Director) who is responsible for the Interschool Athletic program. This person will ensure that each coach and/or coach liaison is familiar with:

- all relevant HDSB documents
- the coaching philosophies and expectations as outlined in the respective athletic association handbooks: Elementary Athletic Council (EATH), and H.S.S.A.A. Constitution (Halton Secondary School Athletic Association)
- specific coaching qualifications and certifications (i.e. First Aid, NCCP), as listed in the current OPASSE specific activity pages

HDSB Instructional Program Leads (IPLs) for Elementary and Secondary Health and Physical Education (H&PE), Safety and Well Being will schedule the regular inspection/repair of all gymnasium and fitness facilities and associated equipment as indicated in the following schedule:

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| ● Secondary Schools | annually |
| ● K-8, 2-8 FI single track, Middle Schools | every second year |
| ● Junior Schools (K-5 and K-6) | every third year |

A. Medical Conditions

At the beginning of the school year teachers, coaches and coach liaisons need to be aware of the medical background (e.g., Plan of Care, identified medical peril(s), etc.) and physical limitations of their student athletes. This will include, but is not limited to the knowledge of conditions such as: anaphylaxis, asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, heart disorders, previous concussion, etc.

Each school has a process by which medical information is made available to teachers,

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coaches and coach liaisons at the beginning of the school year and throughout the year as needed. Coaches are to ensure familiarization with their school's process.

Based on the information provided by parents/guardians via the Part B: Emergency Contact/Medical Information, Acknowledgement of Elements of Risk and Permission to Participate Form) teachers, coaches and coach liaisons should review the Board's medical condition protocols and all relevant HDSB Administrative Procedures.

Concussions are always a risk when one participates in physical activity. The HDSB Concussion Prevention, Identification and Management Administrative Procedure will be followed if a student sustains a jarring impact to the head, face, neck or body and shows signs and/or symptoms of a concussion. Parents/guardians will be asked to seek medical attention for their child from a Physician/Nurse Practitioner using an HDSB Suspected Concussion Form which must be completed and returned to the school. If a concussion is diagnosed, a Home and School Concussion Management Plan must be followed. Included in this plan is the Concussion Medical Clearance Form, to be completed by a Physician/Nurse Practitioner before the student returns to any physical education classes, intramural activities and interschool try outs, practices and competitions.

Sudden Arrhythmia Death Syndrome (SADS) refers to a variety of cardiac disorders which are often genetic and undiagnosed that can be responsible for sudden death in young, apparently healthy people. Because physical activity is a common trigger for many sudden cardiac deaths, it is important for teachers/coaches to recognize possible symptoms/warning signs:

- fainting or seizure during physical activity
- fainting or seizure resulting from emotional excitement, emotional distress or being startled (e.g. a sudden loud noise such as a school fire alarm system)

For more information visit the [SADS](#) website.

B. Return to Physical Activity (Non-Concussion Medical Illness/Injuries)

If a student misses any physical activity due to non-concussion related illness or injury requiring professional medical attention, a Return to Physical Activity (Non-Concussion Medical Illness/Injuries) Form must be completed and returned to the school prior to the student resuming any practice or competition.

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2. Coaches Responsibilities

- All new teachers, coaches and coach liaisons must go through an approval process by the Administrator/Designate to determine the individual's ability to coach the activity and ensure that the individual has the knowledge and experience, and where required, additional qualifications and First Aid needed to safely coach the activity.
- Volunteer coaches must go through a formalized application process using the HDSB Volunteer Application Form and be approved by the school administrator. Note: all volunteers require a Criminal Background Check which includes Vulnerable Sector Screening.
- All current coaches should maintain and possess the minimum coaching qualifications and certifications for their activity/sport as outlined in the OPASSE and HDSB Localized Minimum Standards (Interschool).
- Each season, coaches and coach liaisons must attend the sport/season specific Coaches Meeting (Elementary Athletics (EATH) or the Halton Secondary School Athletic Association (H.S.S.A.A)) to obtain important information about the upcoming season, safety standard updates, and code of conduct for Coaches, Athletes and Spectators.
- Prior to the start of each season, coaches and coach liaisons must review the related HDSB Administrative Procedures referenced below, the HDSB Localized Minimum Standards, and the specific activity page for their sport from the Interschool module of OPASSE.
- All student athletes must have a completed Interschool Athletics Package, Part B: Emergency Contact/ Medical Information, Acknowledgement of Elements of Risk and Permission to Participate Form. This package must be returned and signed by the parent/ guardian on behalf of their child **PRIOR to the first try out for EACH sport** in which their child is a participant.
- Coaches and coach liaisons shall have access to the completed Interschool Athletics Package, Part B: Emergency Contact/Medical Information, Acknowledgement of Elements of Risk, Request to Participate and Informed Consent Form at **all** try outs, practices and competitions.
- Coaches shall inform parents/guardians and discuss with students/athletes the risks associated with the sport prior to the start of the season and outline ways in which the risks can be minimized, including Concussion Code of Conduct and Concussion Awareness Resources (Rowan's Law).
- Coaches and coach liaisons must be aware of and adhere to the procedures for the transportation of students and ensure that parents/guardians have completed the required HDSB permission forms prior to transporting student-athletes.

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3. Identification of an “In charge” person

Prior to the start of any try out, practice or competition, an **“In charge”** person must be identified to all players/teams/coaches/officials/groups involved in the activity. Examples of who might assume this role include:

- teachers, coaches and/or coach liaison of the home team
- convenor of the tournament
- game official
- Elementary Athletics (EATH) or Halton Secondary School Athletic Association (H.S.S.A.A.) Convenor
- HDSB Instructional Program Leads (IPLs) for Elementary and Secondary Health and Physical Education (HPE), Safety and Well Being

While the “In charge” adult may be responsible for first aid, as per above, the “In-charge” adult also has the responsibility to ensure:

- the locations of the fire alarms/exits and alternative exit routes, known to all participants;
- the environment in which athletes will play is safe for practice/competition. This can be done by completing a pre-activity check of the facilities (e.g., playing field, floor, ice, etc.);
- game/match officials are certified in all sports;
- consideration is given to all environmental conditions (lightning, extreme temperatures, high winds, tornadoes and inclement weather). Safety precautions and protocols must be communicated to all participants and spectators in response to environmental risks.

4. First Aid Requirements

The First Aid requirements vary by interschool sport, and are outlined in the specific OPASSE Interschool activity pages. The minimum requirement for first aid is that a coach or coach liaison take responsibility for providing first aid to injured students.

They must:

- follow the HDSB Concussion Prevention, Identification and Management Admin Procedure,
- follow the school's first aid emergency action plan, and
- be present during the entire try out, practice or competition.

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Where there is a required certification for First Aid provision, the coach or coach liaison who takes responsibility for providing first aid to injured students must:

- as a minimum, have a current first aid certification from a recognized first aid provider (e.g. St. John Ambulance, Red Cross) that includes CPR B or C and training in head, neck and spinal injury management;
- be readily accessible during the entire try out, practice or competition;
- be aware of the school's first aid emergency action plan and follow their first aid emergency response;
- follow the HDSB Concussion Prevention, Identification and Management Admin Procedure; and
- not be a participant in the activity (fully focus on their role as a First Aid provider).

A. Expectations of First Aid Provider at practices and competitions

For the purposes of providing first aid at practices and competitions (on or off school sites), the coach or coach liaison is responsible for the following for each of their own student athletes:

- having access to the students' Interschool Athletics Package Part B: Emergency Contact/Medical Information, Acknowledgement of Elements of Risk and Permission to Participate Form which includes parent/guardian/emergency contact information;
- identifying athletes with medical conditions (e.g., anaphylaxis, asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, heart disorders, previous concussion, etc.);
- managing those medical conditions and providing for any emergency first aid as needed;
- ensuring first aid kits are available, accessible and appropriately stocked (see OPASSE: [Sample First Aid Kit Contents](#) and/or [Sample Portable Off-Site First Aid Kit Contents](#));
- ensuring there is a suitable means of communication on site (e.g., phone) in event of emergency to call 911, parent/guardian and School Administrator;
- being knowledgeable of the board or sites' Emergency Action Plan;
- identifying and managing a suspected concussion and following up with parents/admin/EMS using the HDSB Concussion Prevention, Identification and Management Admin Procedure;
- completing the required student injury/accident reports;
- implementing corrective measures to help prevent the occurrence of an injury;
- implementing universal precautions (e.g., using impermeable gloves) when dealing

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- situations involving blood and other bodily fluids;
- completing Board/school required student injury/accident reports and OSBIE Incident Reports as required and notifying the parent/guardian, Principal, Health and Physical Education Department Heads (if applicable) and the appropriate Board official(s); and
- implement corrective measures to help prevent the occurrence of an injury.

NOTE: The team coach or designate must not be involved in running the practice or be coaching the game while first aid is being administered.

B. Expectations of First Aid Provider when hosting a competition or tournament:

For the purposes of providing first aid when hosting a competition/tournament (on or off school site) the team coach or designate/convenor of a competition or tournament is responsible for the following:

- being knowledgeable of the board or sites' Emergency Action Plan. When the non-school facilities have an Emergency Action Plan with a higher standard of care than the school board, the facility protocol must be followed;
- ensure an individual who takes responsibility for providing first aid is present throughout the entire duration of the competition or tournament;
- ensuring first aid kits are available, accessible and appropriately stocked (see OPASSE: Sample First Aid Kit Contents and/or Sample Portable Off-Site First Aid Kit Contents);
- ensuring there is a suitable means of communication on site (e.g., phone) in event of emergency to call 911, parent/guardian and School Administrator;
- ensure there are procedures in place for calling 911;
- implementing universal precautions (e.g., using impermeable gloves) when dealing with situations involving blood and other bodily fluids.

NOTE: The team coach or designate/convenor must be free of coaching duties in order to deal with emergencies.

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Cross-Reference:

Legislation

Ontario Education Act

Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Ministry Policy & Program Memoranda

PPM 158 (School board policies on concussion)

PPM 161 (Supporting children and students with prevalent medical conditions (anaphylaxis, asthma, diabetes, and/or epilepsy) in schools)

Board Policies, Procedures & Protocols

Administration of Prescribed and Emergency Medications

Supporting Students with Anaphylaxis

Supporting Students with Asthma

Automated External Defibrillators (AED)

Concussion Prevention, Identification and Management

Day Field Trips and In-School Presentations

Supporting Students with Diabetes

Environmental Conditions and Physical Activity

Supporting Students with Epilepsy Seizures

Head Protection in Physical Activity for Students, Staff and Volunteers

Provision of First Aid

Student Excursions

Water Based Activities In Near Over or On Water

HDSB Code of Conduct

HDSB Localized Site Specific Emergency Response Plans

HDSB Localized Minimum Standards

Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education (OPASSE)

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Revision History

- September 2025 - Comprehensive review. Aligned with updated language required by the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education (OPASSE).
- June 2021
- May 2019