



# Colorado's Senate Bill 40

## Jake Snakenberg Youth Concussion Act

*Senate Bill 40 helps to educate school coaches, parents, and players and protect student athletes from the serious dangers of sports concussions.*

### Background

Youth sports teach kids leadership, teamwork, self-confidence, and athleticism. Sports provide a healthy outlet for kids' energy, but they can also pose certain risks, including the risk of a concussion. In recent years, many organizations, including the NFL and NCAA, have paid increasing attention to the risks of concussion and head injuries among athletes. Now, in response to national attention and an increasing body of medical evidence about the dangers of sports concussion, a number of states are taking steps to protect youth athletes.

### What does Senate Bill 40 do?

Senate Bill 40 helps to keep young athletes **active and safe** in three important ways:

- 1) SB-40 ensures that coaches of youth sports for kids age 11-18 get training in how to understand the nature and risk of concussions and be able to recognize the signs and symptoms that indicate a young athlete may have sustained a concussion.
- 2) If a coach suspects that a player has sustained a concussion, the athlete must be removed from practice or play and cannot return that same day (unless the signs and symptoms of a concussion can be readily explained by another condition).
- 3) Before returning to practice or play, a player who has been removed due to a suspected concussion must be evaluated by a health care provider and receive written clearance from the provider to return to play. In an effort to ensure access in urban, suburban, and rural areas, the bill broadly defines the health care providers that can determine if an athlete is ready to return to play—physicians, neuropsychologists, physician assistants, nurse practitioners.<sup>1</sup>

Sponsored by Senators Nancy Spence (R) and Linda Newell (D), as well as Representatives Ken Summers (R) and Nancy Todd (D), Senate Bill 40 was signed into law on March 29, 2011 and its provisions take effect January 1, 2012. SB-40's full text can be found [here](#).

### Are concussions common?

While concussions are more common in some sports, concussions can and do occur in every sport. It is estimated that between **1,500 and 2,500 youth athletes** visit Colorado emergency rooms for sports-related concussions each year.<sup>2</sup>

The number of children treated in the outpatient Concussion Program at The Children's Hospital has risen steadily over the last three years at an average rate of 32% per year. For kids seen in the Concussion Program, our most recent data shows that **70 percent of concussions were sports- or recreation-related**. Of the children seen in the TCH Emergency Department or at our Urgent Care Clinics and diagnosed with a concussion (all causes), **those aged 11-17 were the most common**—one important reason that SB-040 covers middle school-aged athletes in addition to high school-aged kids.

### Do we really need Senate Bill 40?

**Yes! Coaches and athletic trainers need to recognize concussions when they happen.** Concussions pose particular dangers to children and young adults, whose brains are still developing and take longer to recover after an injury. Kids are more likely to get concussions in the first place, and another impact before a prior concussion has fully healed can lead to permanent injury and disability or, in rare cases, even death.

**Yes! Kids need rest when they've had a concussion.** While less visible than a broken arm or a sprained ankle, a concussion is an injury to the brain, and every concussion is serious. Most concussions heal fully, but a young athlete needs plenty of time—and proper medical attention—to give the brain an opportunity to mend.

[www.thechildrenshospital.org](http://www.thechildrenshospital.org)

**For more information • Zach Zaslow • (303) 886-0818 • [zaslow.zach@tchden.org](mailto:zaslow.zach@tchden.org)**

<sup>1</sup> The bill also permits registered athletic trainers, who by law work under the supervision of a physician, to manage a concussed athlete's gradual return to play after the athlete has been evaluated and received clearance to return to play from a health care provider.

<sup>2</sup> This number significantly underestimates the total incidence of youth sports concussions because it does not include youth athletes evaluated in non-emergency department settings or concussions that go undiagnosed or untreated. Source: *Youth Sports Concussion: Recommendations for Enhancing Athlete Safety* available at <http://www.biacolorado.org>.