

# Returning to the Classroom After Concussion: West Virginia's Road to Return to Learn

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Formation of Work Group (Table1) September 2016

Literature Reviews/Best Practices-protocol Development October- December 2016

Engaging Stakeholders (Table 2) January 2017

Determining Strategy-Introduction of Legislation February – April 2017

Regrouping After Bill did not Advance May 2017

Collaboration with WVDE June 2017-Present

## Background

- ⤴ Each year thousands of children in the United States sustain concussions<sup>1</sup>.
- ⤴ Formalized legislation for the Return to Play process is enacted in all 50 states<sup>2</sup> but few states have Return to Learn programs.
- ⤴ Return to Learn is the process of applying short term accommodations or adjustments within the learning environment while students recover from a concussion<sup>3</sup> by any means, not just sports.
- ⤴ In August 2016, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Services, within the West Virginia University Center for Excellence in Disabilities (CED), began a project to increase concussion education, resource availability, advocacy and awareness after discovering a lack of educational supports for students in West Virginia (WV).

## Objectives

- ⤴ The purpose of this poster is to describe the steps taken by the CED TBI Services program to promote Return to Learn standards in the state to include:
  - Researching and reviewing existing Return to Learn program information available online.
  - Engaging with experts in the field and stakeholders.
  - Promoting a legislative mandate to create customized programming for pre-kindergarten through secondary education.
  - Working with the Department of Education to inform educators of recommendations through guidance documents.
- ⤴ The Return to Learn project goals are to create a customized protocol for WV and assist with implementing these protocols throughout the state

## Description of Return to Learn Development

- ⤴ Project staff determined that development of Return to Learn protocols for the WV educational system required research to analyze implemented programs in other states.
- ⤴ CED TBI Services staff identified educational specialties with experience working with students through recovery after concussion.
- ⤴ A 10-member work group (see Table 1.) was convened to recommend Return to Learn protocols for WV.

## Table 1. Return to Lean Work Group Members' Areas of Expertise

- ⤴ Pediatric psychology

- ⤴ Speech and language pathology
- ⤴ Public policy and administration
- ⤴ Occupational therapy
- ⤴ Vocational rehabilitation
- ⤴ Physical therapy
- ⤴ Juvenile justice
- ⤴ School nursing
- ⤴ Sports management
- ⤴ School counseling
  
- ⤴ Results of online literature reviews were reported during biweekly meetings.
- ⤴ Return to Learn programs from 10 states were reviewed for:
  - Existence of legislative policy
  - Duration of classroom modifications
  - Roles of team members
  - Targeted age groups
  
- ⤴ An envisioned model for Return to Learn programming in WV was created to include 28 days of academic adjustments for students from kindergarten through post-secondary education.
- ⤴ A conclusive stakeholder meeting convened with invitees from agencies impacted by a Return to Learn program (See Table 2.).
- ⤴ Final recommendations for Return to Learn protocols were modified with pre-kindergarten added to target age group.
- ⤴ Stakeholder group supported seeking a legislative sponsor.
- ⤴ Presentation of Return to Learn recommendations occurred with a state senator who was in support of the legislative action.

## Results

- ⤴ Proposed Return to Learn recommendations were written into a legislative bill, presented and sent to Education Committee.
- ⤴ Legislative session ended before bill progressed, but sponsor recommended it for bipartisan study for the upcoming year.
- ⤴ Population was adjusted to pre-kindergarten through secondary education, as post-secondary Return to Learn currently has no precedent for a model program.
- ⤴ CED TBI Services staff initiated contact with the author of a community-based Return to Learn program<sup>4</sup> who agreed to aid with the development of a WV state specific model.
- ⤴ A guidance document including Return to Learn protocols is in development cooperatively with WV Department of Education staff.

## Next Steps - Collaboration with WVDE

- ⤴ Collaboration between CED TBI Services staff with Department of Education and other stakeholders to refine concussion protocols for WV students.
- ⤴ Outreach presentations targeting education on concussion symptoms and management to key stakeholders.
- ⤴ Goal is to implement Return to Learn programs through collaboration with WV Department of Education without the need for mandated legislation.

## References

<sup>1</sup>CDC. Returning to School After Concussion: A Fact Sheet for School Professionals  
[https://www.cdc.gov/headsup/pdfs/schools/tbi\\_returning\\_to\\_school-a.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/headsup/pdfs/schools/tbi_returning_to_school-a.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> CDC. Implementing Return to Play: Learning from the Experiences of Early Implementers  
<https://www.cdc.gov/headsup/policy/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> BIA of America. Return to Learn  
<http://www.biausa.org/concussion/returntolearning>

<sup>4</sup> REAP Concussion Treatment Guidelines  
<https://rockymountainhospitalforchildren.com/service/concussionmanagement-reap-guidelines>

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## Table 2. Stakeholder Group

- ⤴ WVU CED: Director, Assistant Director, TBI Services program staff
- ⤴ WVU Medicine: Pediatrics, Sports Medicine, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy
- ⤴ Marshall University, Communication Disorders
- ⤴ WVU College of Education and Human Services
- ⤴ WVU Office of Accessibility Services
- ⤴ WV Department of Education: Office of Special Education, Student and School Support
- ⤴ WV Secondary School Activities Commission
- ⤴ Disability Rights of WV
- ⤴ Higher Education Policy Commission
- ⤴ WV Community and Technical College System
- ⤴ American Federation of Teachers
- ⤴ WV Educators Association
- ⤴ WV Developmental Disabilities Council
- ⤴ WV Statewide Independent Living Council
- ⤴ Traumatic Brain/Spinal Cord Injury Board
- ⤴ WV Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Medical Services
- ⤴ WV Parent Training and Information
- ⤴ WV Association of School Nurses
- ⤴ WV School Counselor Association
- ⤴ Rural Medical Doctors
- ⤴ Consumers

