

# Inter-School Sports Safety Review Panel (SRP)

July 18 & 19, 2019

Room A – 2021 Brunswick Street

Halifax, NS

Meeting Notes

(Subject to approval by SRP)

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**July 18, 2019**

## **Mi'kmaq Acknowledgement**

The meeting began by acknowledging that it is taking place in M'kma'ki traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq people.

## **Welcome and Introductions**

Co-chairs Dr. Rob Strang and Ms. Sue Taylor-Foley welcomed members of the SRP. Each SRP member was asked to introduce themselves. Support personnel for the panel were introduced. These support individuals include: Steve Machat, Director Personal Development and Wellness, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD), Jeremy Smith, Director Policy, EECD, Mary Veinotte, Leader Extra-Curricular Sports HRCE, Pam Menchenton, Director Communications, Communications NS.

The co-chairs reviewed the agenda, respectful consensus decision making procedures, and the terms of reference, all of which were agreed to by the panel.

## **Overview of Injury Prevention, NS Policies and Legislation**

Mr. Steve Machat, Director – Personal Development and Wellness, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development presented on key aspects and concepts within injury prevention and a summary outline of Nova Scotia education system policies related to injury prevention and school sports. SRP members discussed hospitalization data related to injury in sport and the scope and definition of injury and injury prevention.

## **Current Safety Protocols in Nova Scotia School Sport**

Mr. Stephen MacNeil, Chairperson of the Nova Scotia School Athletic Federation (NSSAF), provided an overview of the operations of the NSSAF and the current safety protocols governing school sport. The NSSAF website had information on concussion management for use of member schools. SRP members discussed the importance of consistent reporting of injuries. First aid and other training and expectations for coaches, managers and other volunteers was also discussed.

## **The Role of Coaching and Training in Sport Safety and Injury: Current Situation, Next Steps and Emerging Directions**

Mr. Mike Hudson, Sports Consultant with the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage, provided an overview of national and provincial perspectives and initiatives on coaching and training specific to safety. Discussion focused on implementation of coach training and other factors that determine and influence school sport safety.

### **Remarks from Deputy Minister Cathy Montreuil**

Deputy Minister Montreuil shared her remarks about the importance of the mandate of the SRP and on behalf of the Minister thanked members for their time, commitment and expertise. Deputy Minister Montreuil also expressed the opportunity that members have to help the education system shape the conditions for promoting well-being through school sport.

### **Sports Injury Epidemiology**

Dr. Rob Strang, Chief Medical Officer of Health, shared some preliminary findings of research into the epidemiology of sports injury. SRP discussion focused on data and reporting of injury, what is the data that is needed to assist with policy making and programming and what we can learn from other jurisdictions to assist Nova Scotia with decision-making.

### **Rowan's Law Advisory Committee**

Mr. Paul Hunter, Director of Development with Rugby Canada, shared his insight and experience with the Rowan's Law Advisory Committee. SRP discussion centred on the primary areas of focus of the Advisory's Committee's recommendations including surveillance, prevention, detection, management and awareness of concussions.

### **Concussion Nova Scotia**

Dr. Tina Atkinson provided an overview of the work of Concussion NS and Parachute, including many of the current concussion diagnostic and other tools currently in place. Dr. Atkinson also discussed potential lessons from other jurisdictions that may be helpful and applicable to Nova Scotia.

### **Wrap Up – Day 1**

Dr. Rob Strang and Ms. Sue Taylor-Foley wrapped up the day by thanking participants for their high level of engagement and reviewed the agenda for Friday's meeting.

July 19, 2019

## Welcome and Reflections

Co-chairs Dr. Rob Strang and Ms. Sue Taylor-Foley welcomed members of the SRP. Working together, each SRP member was asked to generate questions and areas for investigation to discuss with the officials and student athletes who are on discussion panels scheduled for the morning agenda.

### Discussion Panel #1 – The role of officials in school sport safety

The SRP welcomed the officials' discussion panel. The panel represented the sports of football, flag football, rugby, basketball and softball.

The SRP posed the following questions of the panel members:

- ✓ What is the role of officials? For example, 'policing', reporting, coaching, teachable moments.
- ✓ How can officials impact sports culture?
- ✓ Have you seen a shift in the culture regarding how seriously injuries are taken? If so, what do you think contributed to that shift?
- ✓ What do you do when you suspect a player has an injury?
- ✓ What information/training do you need to understand and intervene with injuries and deal with coach/player/parent expectations?
- ✓ Do you have opportunities to limit injury?
- ✓ Do you feel comfortable in the level of training to receive? How often? What resources are available to you?
- ✓ What is your advice to limit injury and increase safety?
- ✓ What do you think is the most effective way to create or enhance a culture of safety?
- ✓ What can be done to reduce abusive behaviour directed towards officials?
- ✓ Do you face push back/abuse if/when you intervene in an injury situation?
- ✓ How do you ensure that rules/standards are being enforced equally across the province?
- ✓ Would a zero tolerance policy provide safer experiences? Create a culture shift? Differences between classroom environment and sport environment?

Additional conversation ensued with panel members and the SRP.

### Discussion Panel #2 – Student – athletes' perspectives

The SRP welcomed the student-athletes' discussion panel. The students represented multi-sport athletes including but not limited to: volleyball, field hockey, football, hockey, flag football, soccer, and track and field.

The SRP posed the following questions of the panel members:

- ✓ How can we educate students about the difference between tough and being injured?
- ✓ How can students influence sports culture?
- ✓ Is school sport safety a primary barrier to participation?
- ✓ Is there a difference between school and community sports?
- ✓ What stops student athletes from reporting?

- ✓ What do we need to consider to foster a more supportive environment with regards to reporting injuries?
- ✓ Why don't some students participate in sports?
- ✓ Do you notice a difference between what you and your peers think about injury in sport vs what adults think about it?
- ✓ Do you feel that students delivering messages on behaviour/safety would be effective?
- ✓ Do you think student athletes feel a personal expectation or pressure from others to cover up injuries/rule breaking/infractions for the sake of the betterment of the team and its success?
- ✓ Would you report a teammate who was injured?
- ✓ Where would you find information about safety in sports?
- ✓ What can be improved in the school environment to better support return to school/play protocols?

Additional conversation ensued with panel members and the SRP.

### Emerging Advice

Dr. Rob Strang and Ms. Sue Taylor-Foley led a facilitated process, asking SRP members to consider the following:

- ✓ What do we need to consider as we discuss access in inter-school sports?
- ✓ What evidence / research do we still need to consider? What gaps do we have in current information that we need?
- ✓ What are some of the emerging themes for advice?
- ✓ What questions should we ask SIP (School Insurance Program)?
- ✓ What's next? What else should be on the next agenda as we work toward our goals?

### Wrap Up – Day 2

Dr. Rob Strang and Ms. Sue Taylor-Foley wrapped up the day by thanking participants for their commitment over the two days and looked forward to the next SRP meeting on August 8.