

## **CORNISH COLLEGE DANCE DEPARTMENT CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROTOCOL**

### **CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT POLICY**

The Cornish Dance Department has developed the following Concussion Management Protocol for our students and faculty. Students who sustain concussions will be guided to medical treatment and advised on return to activity by doctors and the department's physical therapist. When necessary, students will be referred to the college's Disabilities Coordinator for academic accommodations.

Dance Department faculty and students should be aware that a concussion is a serious brain injury that can affect a student's ability to participate in both movement and academic courses for a significant period of time. While the student is recovering, the department chair will work with the student and faculty to maximize course participation through flexible study plans.

Department academic options will include class modifications, alternative participation options, combining attendance in ballet and modern courses to receive credit for one course and incomplete contracts to permit additional time to complete coursework.

The department's goal is to support the student in completing as many credits as possible while respecting the limitations of the injury. However, it is important to acknowledge that a student who is unable to complete enough work to warrant earning credits and grades may be required to withdraw from some courses.

### **CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT PROTOCOL**

The following steps should be followed by students and faculty in the event of a suspected concussion.

#### **IMMEDIATE RESPONSE**

##### **RED FLAGS: Signs to watch for**

Problems could arise over the first 24-48 hours. It is recommended that the student not be left alone during this time period and call 911 or go to the hospital at once if they:

- Have a headache that gets worse
- Are very drowsy or cannot be awakened
- Cannot recognize people or places
- Have repeated vomiting
- Behave unusually or seem confused, are very irritable
- Have seizures (arms and legs jerk uncontrollably)
- Have weak or numb arms or legs
- Are unsteady on their feet, have slurred speech

**When a concussion occurs:**

- Make sure the student is in a safe place and not left alone. The department recommends that a concussed student go to the Dance Office to be observed by the Department Coordinator, or by a peer if the coordinator is not present.
- Observe for 30 minutes. Watch for the Red Flag signs (above). Call 911 if there are any Red Flags.
- Assist the student in filling out a “Concussion Evaluation Form” or completing the SCAT5 online tool ( <https://scat5.cattonline.com/> ). If there is time, make a copy for the student’s record, and give the student a copy to bring to the doctor.
- Refer the student to a doctor: the department recommends that all students who sustain a concussion be evaluated by a healthcare professional. The Department Coordinator will give the injured student a list of approved providers. See Medical Oversight recommendations below.
- The student should not drive and should be accompanied by a friend or fellow student when going home or to the doctor.
- Give the student the Dance Department’s Concussion Injury Packet, including: Concussion Management Policy and Protocols, Concussion Evaluation Form, Return to Dance Template, Preferred Concussion Providers, Concussion Resource Guide and relevant Cornish accident forms and accident insurance information.

**VERY IMPORTANT: THE DANCER SHOULD NOT RETURN TO DANCE CLASSES, REHEARSALS, OR PERFORMANCE THE SAME DAY OF A SUSPECTED CONCUSSION**

**MEDICAL OVERSIGHT**

We recommend that all students see a healthcare professional following a concussion. In the urgent care setting (after normal clinic hours), the provider’s primary role will be to rule out a life threatening injury. The student should expect to receive general advice and recommendations on next steps, but dancers often benefit from working with someone who has specialized expertise to develop a safe plan for returning back to dance and academics.

- The Dance Department provides students with the list of Preferred Concussion Providers, including both urgent care and a specialist. We recommend that students consult one of the specialists (Dr. Grierson) if an appointment can be scheduled within 24-48 hours after an injury. If neither specialist is available, we recommend that students visit urgent care or their family doctor within 24-48 hours following injury.
- If Dr. Grierson is not available within the first 48 hours; the department still recommends that students seek follow-up oversight from one of these two doctors to guide their return to dance activity.
- In the case of evening injuries, students should visit urgent care (not the ER) if no Red Flags are present (see list above), to avoid the noise and chaos of a typical ER setting.
- Students should bring a “Concussion Evaluation Form” or print up from the SCAT5 online tool ( <https://scat5.cattonline.com/> ) to the physician and request a brief note that indicates the student’s symptoms, diagnosis, and recommended next steps.

- The physician can help provide concrete recommendations on a safe protocol for return to academic and dance activities. This is especially important for students with a prior history of concussion, or if they have severe or prolonged symptoms (>7-10 days).
- In the case of a more severe injury, the physician will be able to monitor the dancer's symptoms over time and enlist support of additional specialty services, as appropriate (e.g. Neurology, Psychology, Endocrinology, Ophthalmology, and Radiology).

### **RETURN TO ACADEMICS AND DANCE**

Physical and (relative) mental rest are the hallmarks of care in the early stages after a concussion.

- “When in doubt, sit out”: injured students should not participate in any college lecture or movement courses while experiencing concussion symptoms. Technique class observation is permitted if the environment does not aggravate concussion symptoms.
- Written clearance from a medical professional is required after a suspected concussive event for return to dance or academics.
- The student should develop an individualized Return to Dance Plan (template provided by the department) with a physician, the department's physical therapist (Liz Corwin), and/or another medical professional for a safe return back to lecture and movement courses. The Return to Dance Plan provides a dance-specific sequence for returning to full activity. The student must be completely asymptomatic with one step before moving on to the next. Refer to the RDP for further details.
- The department recommends that a student remain under a doctor's supervision until all symptoms have been resolved. A **signed note** must be provided before a student can participate “full out” in class, rehearsals, and performances.

### **ACADEMIC SUPPORT AND ACCOMMODATIONS:**

- The Dance Department Chair will work with the student and faculty to facilitate appropriate course participation. Department academic options include combining attendance in ballet and modern to receive credit for one technique course, incomplete contracts to permit additional time to complete assignments, class modifications, and alternative participation options.
- Students with severe or prolonged symptoms will be referred to the college Disabilities Coordinator to develop reasonable accommodations.
  - Students generally do better the earlier they are able to “normalize” their academic routine after a concussive event. The social isolation that occurs after such an injury can be just as difficult to overcome as the physical symptoms. Many students do well when given reasonable accommodations in the classroom setting (e.g. frequent breaks, delayed assignment deadlines, rescheduled tests/quizzes).
- The department's goal is to support the student in completing as many credits as possible while respecting the limitations of the injury. However, it is important to acknowledge that a student who is unable to complete enough work to warrant earning credits and grades may be required to withdraw from some courses.

