

Brain Injury Information for Parents

What is a Brain Injury?

A brain injury is damage to the brain or skull that occurs after birth and affects how the brain works. There are two types of brain injuries:

- **Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI)** are caused by an external force, such as a bump, blow or jolt to the head or body, or a penetrating head injury that disrupts the normal functioning of the brain. The severity of a TBI may range from mild (including concussion) to moderate/severe.

Common causes of TBI include:

- Falls
- Sports Injuries (such as concussion)
- Motor Vehicle Accidents
- Struck By/Against Something

- **Non-Traumatic Brain Injuries (nTBI)** are caused by an internal event that disrupts the normal functioning of the brain. Common causes of nTBI may include:

- Stroke
- Tumor
- Near Drowning/Suffocation
- Cardiac Arrest
- Lack of Oxygen or Blood Flow
- Toxic Exposure
- Substance Abuse/Overdose
- Infection



Common difficulties that may occur after brain injury include:

- Physical - fatigue, speech, vision, hearing, headaches, coordination, balance, seizures, etc.
- Cognitive - memory, attention, slowed thinking, communication skills, planning, initiation, problem-solving, acting without thinking, judgment, impulsive, etc.
- Emotional/Behavioral - anxiety, depression, mood swings, restlessness, lowered self-esteem, irritability, difficulty controlling emotions, etc.

Returning to School with a Brain Injury

Each student and their brain injury are unique. There are a variety of plans that schools might develop to assist students with brain injuries, including an Individual Education Plan (IEP), a Section 504 Plan, or an Individual Health Plan (IHP). More information about these plans can be found on the back of this page.

Parent Role

Parents are the key connector between all partners. They monitor the student frequently, inquire about symptoms and feelings, and gather and share information with others.



School Role

- Assign a school point person.
- Consider forming a team, which could include a counselor, school nurse, teacher, or coach.
- Determine if a formal plan is needed.

Healthcare Provider Role

- Supervise student's medical care and collaborate with the family and school.
- Make suggestions for possible accommodations for the classroom.

Student/Parent Role

- Communicate symptoms and feelings with an adult on the team.
- Communicate need for assistance or change in accommodations.



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"Hardships often prepare ordinary people for an extraordinary destiny." - C.S. Lewis

Types of Plans

Section 504 Plan - provides assistance to a student who can largely access the general education curriculum with accommodations to the learning environment (such as extra time on tests). A 504 plan is created by the school 504 coordinator or the school counselor once a student has been evaluated and qualifies.

Individual Education Plan (IEP) - provides specialized instruction such as one-on-one instruction outside the classroom and services (such as physical, occupational, or speech therapy sessions) or accommodations (like student notetakers or extended time for tests), for a student who needs significant modifications to access the curriculum. An IEP is created by a special education teacher once a student has been evaluated and qualifies for special education services.

Individual Health Plan (IHP) - if a student has medical orders (such as tube feedings, suctioning, oxygen administration, wound care, or catheterizations) for health treatments that occur during the day, an IHP is often created by the school nurse to address health needs not addressed in an IEP or 504 plan.

Parent Checklist

- Notify the school that your student has sustained a brain injury and ask who the best person in the school would be to talk with about your student's needs (principal, nurse, counselor, or teacher) - your point person. If you have not received a response within five (5) days, contact the school.
- Ask the school what medical documentation is needed to create a plan for your student.
- Collaborate with the school - schedule a meeting (in person or electronically) with the point person. At the meeting, discuss the following items:
 - Review medical history and present medical documentation.
 - Describe your student's cognitive, physical, and emotional symptoms.
 - Ask what type of plan the school can develop to meet your student's needs, and how they will provide accommodations to meet these needs.
- Consider a timeline for your student to return to school - partial days or full days.
- Monitor and provide ongoing support to your student.

Parent Resources

- [Brain Injury Association of Indiana \(BIAI\)](#)
- [Brain Injury Association of America \(BIAA\)](#)
- [CDC's Traumatic Brain Injury Resources](#)
- [Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center for TBI](#)
- [IU NeuroResource Facilitation](#)
- [Easter Seals Resource Facilitation](#)
- [Brainline](#)
- [Concussion Management in Indiana Schools](#)
- [Indiana Family and Social Services Administration Brain Injury Education](#)