



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Department of Health Promotes BrainSTEPS to Help Students with Traumatic Brain Injury**

**Harrisburg, PA** – Department of Health officials today joined local health educators and members from the BrainSTEPS Child and Adolescent Brain Injury School Re-Entry Consulting Program to discuss the impacts of a traumatic brain injury (TBI) and highlight the resources available that help students with a TBI get the support they need.

“Traumatic brain injuries are a disruption in the normal function of the brain, caused by a bump, blow or jolt to the head,” Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine said. “Everyone is at-risk for a TBI, especially young children and older adults. It is imperative that we work to increase the public’s knowledge of traumatic brain injuries so we can get the support and resources to individuals who need it most.”

Traumatic brain injuries are a significant public health issue and a major cause of death and disability in the U.S. Those who survive a TBI can have effects that last a few days to the rest of their lives. Effects of TBI can include impairments related to:

- Thinking or memory;
- Movement;
- Sensation, like hearing or vision; or
- Emotional functions, such as personality changes or depression.

TBIs can range from mild to severe. A mild TBI results in a brief change in mental status or consciousness. A severe TBI results in an extended period of unconsciousness or memory loss after the injury. Most TBIs that occur each year are mild and are commonly called concussions.

“Concussions are serious brain injuries that change the way the brain works,” Dr. Levine said. “After a concussion, children often report that their mental energy is low, and they become tired more easily. Even though concussions are considered a mild brain injury, their effects can be serious. This is why it is essential that every school district establish a Concussion Management Team.”

A Concussion Management Team is made up of school personnel who serve as the students’ academic and symptom monitor. It is recommended that schools follow an individualized approach to meet the student’s post-injury needs and monitor progress. If a student is still experiencing symptoms more than four to six weeks after injury, they should

be referred to Pennsylvania's BrainSTEPS (Strategies, Teaching Educators, Parents, and Students) Program.

The department created the BrainSTEPS program to provide services to students who have experienced an acquired brain injury (TBI and non-TBI). The program helps students who have a brain injury that is still impacting their performance four or more weeks after the injury. Once referred for services, the student receives program monitoring from the moment of referral until graduation. A referral can be made online at [www.brainsteps.net](http://www.brainsteps.net).

Additionally, all schools in Pennsylvania can register and train their Concussion Management Team online for free through the BrainSTEPS program. The program has trained more than 2,500 school staff professionals serving on concussion teams across the state.

Resources for TBIs and concussions can be found on the Department of Health's website at [health.pa.gov](http://health.pa.gov) or follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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