An Introduction of Interdisciplinary Concussion Rehabilitation Program Standards

Introduction:

69 million people worldwide annually experience a concussion. Most people who experience a concussion have symptoms resolve within one month, however some continue to experience persisting symptoms for a prolonged period of time. Persons who have experienced a concussion may benefit from rehabilitation throughout that continuum of recovery.

Methods:

In May 2023, CARF International brought together an interdisciplinary advisory committee called the International Standards Advisory Committee (ISAC) to develop standards for the accreditation of healthcare programs that care for individuals who have experienced concussions. After surveying national and international stakeholders, it was determined that concussion care varies by location, within clinical disciplines, and the specific interventions provided. CARF identified a need to develop an interdisciplinary set of standards to promote evidence-based program guidelines for the prevention and care management of persons who have experienced a concussion.

When creating the ISAC, CARF partnered with various organizations (including APTA) to develop standards for concussion care that would be applicable globally. The group included a mix of Medical Doctors, Doctors of Osteopathy, Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists, Psychologists, Speech Language Pathologists, Physical Therapists, and Athletic Trainers. The committee was tasked with:

- Developing new concussion standards and adapting existing CARF standards to optimize treatment for persons served, their families, and their caregivers.
- Using ongoing concussion care research and current evidence as it pertains to preventing concussion, initial management, and long-term care of the sequelae from concussion and its impact on the individual and their ability to return to life roles.
- Ensuring the standards are applicable to programs serving all populations of individuals affected by concussion.

These Concussion Rehabilitation Program standards were than shared with the public field of stakeholders during a field review, which sought feedback on the relevance of the standards and resulted in over 200 responses which were incorporated into the final standards.



Results:

Concussion rehabilitation programs are individualized, coordinated, and focused on the return of persons served to participation in life roles. The services provided are interdisciplinary in nature, with the capability of addressing the health and rehabilitation needs of the persons served in support of their desired outcomes. Such programs provide integrated, evidence-based, person-centered care that promotes self-management, self-advocacy, and prevention of future concussion.

The CARF Concussion Rehabilitation Program standards are published in CARF's 2024 Medical Rehabilitation Standards Manual and include the following content areas:

- Scope of services provided
- Use of clinical practice guidelines and evidence-based practice
- Program structure
- Initial and ongoing assessments
- **Coordination and integration of services**
- work, and sport
- **Competency-based training of personnel**
- Participation in research opportunities

Support of return to life roles, including but not limited to, return to school,

- continuum
- populations

Conclusion:

A CARF-accredited Concussion Rehabilitation Program is a resource to healthcare providers and community stakeholders regarding concussion prevention, identification, management, and rehabilitation. It utilizes current research and evidence-based practices to provide effective rehabilitation and supports future improvements by advocating for or participating in concussion research. The program demonstrates the commitment, capabilities, and resources to comprehensively address the diverse and potentially complex needs of persons who have experienced a concussion.

Accreditation in concussion rehabilitation demonstrates a program's commitment to quality and performance improvement in its clinical and business practices, and it supports partnership with CARF International to enhance the lives of persons served.

• Education for persons served, the public, and stakeholders across the care

Education and advocacy regarding underserved and underdiagnosed

• Engagement with healthcare providers across the continuum

For more information contact: Terrence Carolan, MSPT, MBA Managing Director, Medical Rehabilitation tcarolan@carf.org or (973) 229-4048



6951 East Southpoint Road Tucson, Arizona 85756