

2020 Highlights of Pennsylvania's Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board



Programs, Activities and Supports

The Department of Health (Department) formed the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Advisory Board (Board) in 2000 to support the responsibilities essential to the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) Planning and Implementation Grant process, which became the Administration for Community Living (ACL) TBI State Partnership Grant. The Board is comprised of a variety of stakeholders representing: State agencies and offices; TBI programs and providers; as well as people who have sustained a TBI and family members. The Department has continued to support the Board while utilizing HRSA and Administration for Community Living (ACL) funding for other TBI programming.

Pennsylvania Statistics:

- **209,880** people are living with brain injury related disabilities;
- **138,600** adults and children sustain a brain injury every year;
- **1,980** die from brain injuries each year;
- **11,088** are hospitalized each year after a brain injury;
- **15,840** are seen in the Emergency Room following a brain injury each year; and
- **17,107** Pennsylvania children (19 or under) have sports-related brain injuries.

Is TBI Preventable? More than 85% of all TBIs can be prevented by one of the following:

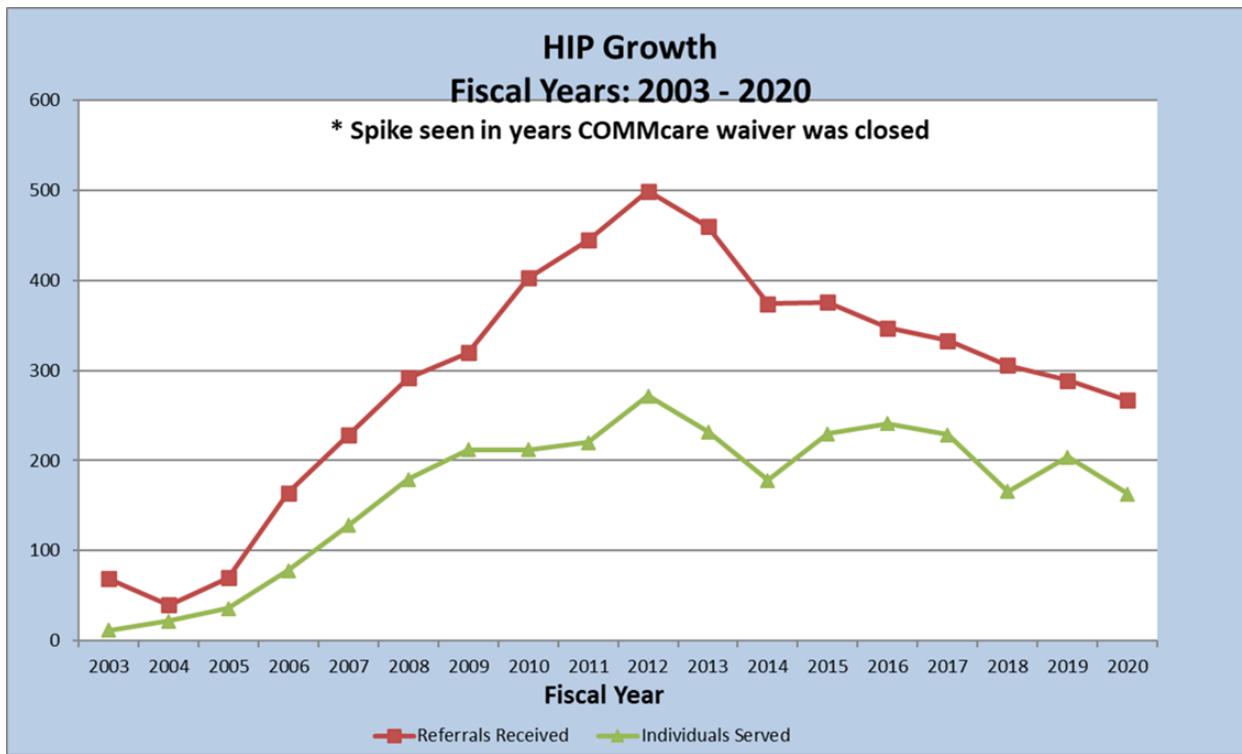
- Seat belts are 57% effective in preventing traumatic and fatal brain injuries;
- Properly fitted helmets reduce the risk of brain injuries by 88%;
- Over half of all brain injuries are related to alcohol and drug abuse; and
- Nearly 20% of all older adult falls result in a brain injury.

Head Injury Program

The Head Injury Program (HIP) was created in 1988 by the Emergency Medical Services Act of 1985 and pays for head injury rehabilitation services for people with a TBI who qualify. Enrolled individuals may receive up to 12 months or \$100,000 for rehabilitation

services, followed by a maximum of six consecutive months or \$1,000 for case management to assist with transition out of the HIP. The goal of the program is to help individuals with a TBI live as independently as possible in their homes and communities. In December 2018, the age limit to apply for the HIP was decreased from 21 to 18 years of age.

Referencing the chart below, **in 2020 there were 163 individuals served**. HIP funding continues to decrease and was reduced to 4.1 million in FY 2019/2020 (was 4.3 in FY 2018/2019; 4.5 in FY 2017/2018; 4.65 million in FY 2016/2017). In 2020, the number of individuals served has decreased from 2019 due to Covid restrictions. Many facilities were closed and individuals services were placed on hold.



Administration for Community Living (ACL) Grant

In 2020, the Department of Health continued work on a three-year grant from the ACL. The Department has selected three focus areas for this grant: NeuroResource Facilitation, Juvenile Justice, and Older Adults. The ACL TBI State Implementation Partnership Grant will conclude on May 31, 2021. ACL has approved applications for carry over funding again this year, for which the Department applied and was awarded. The carry over funding was distributed to Counseling and Rehabilitation, Inc. (C&R, Inc.) and the Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania.

NeuroResource Facilitation Program:

As part of the ACL grant, the Department of Health partnered with Counseling and Rehabilitation, Inc. (C&R, Inc.) to implement and facilitate the NeuroResource Facilitation Program (NRFP). The NRFP helps Pennsylvania residents, age 18 and older with TBIs, and their family members, to identify, navigate, and access brain injury resources, services and supports in their local area. The goal of the program is to maximize the health, independence and overall well-being of individuals with TBIs in Pennsylvania.

In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) affected the number of referrals received and the ability to communicate efficiently with referrals/participants and other agencies and/or support persons. From March to June 2020, initial meetings with participants were not able to be conducted in person (meetings were conducted by telephone). In-person presentations to community groups and/or organizations about the NRFP were also unable to take place, due to guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Governor Wolf in a effort to reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure. In July 2020, in-person intakes resumed and follow through occurred with action plans, safety precautions were put in place.

The needs of individuals in the NRFP have continued to be related to obtaining information about, being referred to, and/or receiving assistance to apply for services through public transportation or paratransit providers, Section 8 Housing, their local Area Agency on Aging, the Tri-State Advocacy Project, Pennsylvania Health Law Project, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), the Office of Long-Term Living, Community Health Choices, brain injury support groups affiliated with the Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania (BIAPA), and/or medical/clinical programs and providers. Additionally, C&R, Inc. personnel attend various community meetings by telephone/videoconference to gather information about resources for NRFP participants and to share information about the NRFP.

The ACL requested outcomes data be collected, pre and post participation in the NRFP, about the NRFP participants' military involvement, housing status/living situation, employment status, and transition from an institutional setting. Since July 1, 2020, a comprehensive data collection tool has been used, Data Collection for the Analysis of Outcomes of the NeuroResource Facilitation Program (NRFP). The tool was developed to gather the data requested by ACL, and additional data about NRFP participants' education/training, transportation, involvement in mental health and substance abuse services, involvement with family members, social interaction, and community inclusion.

Additionally, work has continued on a statewide Resource Manual: Addressing the Needs of Pennsylvanians with Traumatic Brain Injuries, organized by county (there are 67 counties in Pennsylvania), that includes information related to the needs identified by

NRFP participants and needs widely reported in the periodical literature on traumatic brain injury, including advocacy organizations, brain injury rehabilitation programs, brain injury support groups, county assistance agencies, domestic violence resources, food pantries, hospitals and rehabilitation hospitals, housing, mental health and substance abuse services, skilled nursing facilities, transportation, and vocational resources.

Juvenile Justice Technical Assistance and Training:

In 2020, the Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania and the Department of Health were able to provide both training and technical assistance within the juvenile justice system through a grant from the Administration for Community Living. The focus of this grant is on providing education, training and technical assistance to existing juvenile service providers in PA. Outreach has targeted potential residential and outpatient facilities as well as probation departments in order to identify potential sites for training and consultation. Over 700 individuals received education, training or technical assistance throughout the year.

TBI Education, Training, and Outreach for Older Adult Populations:

The Department of Health was awarded a grant through the Administration for Community Living to provide outreach and training to those working in eldercare in PA in collaboration with the Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania. The focus of the grant is to increase awareness of the issue of brain injury in older adults. Outreach was targeted to eldercare facilities including PA's LIFE centers throughout the state. Several trainings had to be canceled, postponed, and/or rescheduled secondary to COVID-19, and all materials were adapted to be delivered in a virtual format. During 2020, seven trainings were provided statewide, reaching 325 professionals.

Through both the Juvenile Justice and Training and Outreach efforts for eldercare and other non-traditional professionals, there were a total of 26 presentations made.

Opioids Project

The Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania, with funding and direction from the Department of Health, developed a course on the intersection of brain injury and opioids misuse. The course consists of four 2-hour classes covering brain injury education, screening for brain injury, the impact of brain injury on response to substance abuse treatment, interventions to maximize success, and brain injury resources. The course is designed primarily for substance abuse providers and can be adapted for other audiences, including brain injury providers. The content was originally designed to be delivered in person but was adapted for virtual delivery, including increasing video content and polls to maintain audience engagement.

Telerehab Pilot

This program was conceptualized by a work group of the Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board which proposed conducting a pilot project to demonstrate the potential benefits of providing cognitive rehabilitation through a remote mechanism. The project was implemented in 2020 and 26 individuals who receive Cognitive Rehabilitation as a covered service in the Department's Head Injury Program were enrolled. The pilot project includes a Program Evaluation component, which is designed to study the usability of the service and the satisfaction of both the service recipients and the service providers. Data collection includes both process data and outcome data and will be collected through March 2021, with a final report of findings following the completion of the project.

Brain Injury Ambassador Program

This program is a collaboration between the Department of Health and the Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania (BIAPA) for families and caregivers of people coming through in-patient trauma and rehabilitation hospitals throughout Pennsylvania. The goal is to connect with families early on to let them know that there is hope and help available after brain injury. Trained Brain Injury Ambassadors reach out to families referred by liaisons from participating rehabilitation facilities in their region to share information about brain injury services and supports they may need in the future. Ambassadors establish a communication method so families and caregivers can receive the BIAPA newsletter, and let them know about the Brain Injury Resource Line (BIRL), which they can call if help is needed in the future. While the original intent was to meet families in person, all contacts have been virtual since the implementation in May 2020.

Community HealthChoices (Department of Human Services/Office of Long-Term Living):

As everyone knows, 2020 and moving into 2021 has been a very challenging year due to the Pandemic. It has been a challenge to continue providing services to meet the changing needs of our Community HealthChoices (CHC) participants and their families. Most congregate settings were closed for safety and services had to be diverted and provided in the home for these participants who attended those programs. The workforce has also been challenged to provide services in a safe manner but also in meeting the increasing needs of our population. Shortage of staff created numerous hurdles in being able to provide all the needed services on a daily basis. The Office of Long Term Living and the CHC Managed Care Organizations (MCOs), along with all of our providers, stepped up to meet the needs of our participants. Looking towards a brighter future in 2021 as the vaccine is rolled out across the state.

As of January 1, 2020, the CHC has been fully implemented statewide. It was implemented over a three- year time period beginning in January 2018, a fourteen-county area in the Southwest, then in January 2019 a five-county area in the Southeast and then

in January 2020, the 48 counties in the Northwest, Northeast, and Lehigh/Capital area. CHC is a Medicaid managed care program that includes physical health benefits and long-term services and supports (LTSS). The program is nationally referred to as a managed long-term service and supports program (MLTSS). The following individuals could qualify for CHC: individuals who are 21 years of age or older and dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid; individuals who are 21 years of age or older and eligible for Medicaid (LTSS) because they need the level of care provided by a nursing facility; and individuals currently enrolled in the LIFE Program only if they expressly select to transition from LIFE to a CHC MCO. The following individuals are not eligible for CHC: people receiving long-term services and supports through the OBRA waiver and are not nursing facility eligible; and individuals with an intellectual or developmental disability receiving services beyond supports coordination through the Department of Human Services' (DHS) Office of Developmental Programs and are residents in a state-operated nursing facility, including the state veteran's home.

The goal of CHC is to serve more people in the community in order to give them the opportunity to work, spend more time with their families, and experience an overall better quality of life. CHC was developed to enhance access to and improve coordination of medical care and to create a person-driven, long term support system in which people have choice, control, and access to a full array of quality services that provide independence, health, and quality of life. LTSS help eligible individuals to perform activities in their home such as bathing, dressing, preparing meals, and administering medications.

The following graphic represents the CHC Phases:



The MCOs participating in CHC include:

■ MANAGED CARE ORGANIZATIONS

- The selected offerors were announced on August 30, 2016.



UPMC Community HealthChoices

- www.AmerihealthCaritasCHC.com
- www.PAHealthWellness.com
- www.upmchealthplan.com/chc



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DHS - OLTL will continue to provide information about relevant CHC topics through various means on specific topics, narrated training segments and statewide provider assistance events. Information on CHC is located on DHS's website at:
www.HealthChoices.pa.gov.

DHS - OLTL continues to provide ongoing CHC updates at stakeholder's meetings and other webinars as requested. OLTL has both a Provider and Participant Helpline as resource information contacts. The following resources are available:

■ RESOURCE INFORMATION

CHC LISTSERV // STAY INFORMED: <http://listserv.dpw.state.pa.us/oltl-community-healthchoices.html>

COMMUNITY HEALTHCHOICES WEBSITE: www.healthchoices.pa.gov

MLTSS SUBMAAC WEBSITE:
www.dhs.pa.gov/communitypartners/informationforadvocatesandstakeholders/mltss

EMAIL COMMENTS TO: RA-PWCHC@pa.gov

OLTL PROVIDER LINE: 1-800-932-0939

OLTL PARTICIPANT LINE: 1-800-757-5042

INDEPENDENT ENROLLMENT BROKER: 1-844-824-3655 or (TTY 1-833-254-0690)
or visit www.enrollhc.com



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BrainSTEPS – Child & Adolescent Brain Injury School Re-Entry Program:

<http://www.brainsteps.net/> #1-724-944-6542:

BrainSTEPS (Strategies Teaching Educators, Parents, and Students) is an educational initiative delivered through statewide Intermediate Units (IUs). It was created by the Department in 2007 and is jointly funded by the Department and the PA Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education via the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network . BrainSTEPS supports children and adolescents who have sustained acquired brain injuries by offering resources to parents/students, and training and consultation to school staff until high school graduation.

As of 2020:

- 30 BrainSTEPS teams;
- Approximately 260 educational consultants from IUs, school districts, and medical rehabilitation facilities serving on the teams;
- BrainSTEPS teams are in place in 28 IUs across PA and 2 large school districts;
 - 319 new students were referred in 2020 (*numbers were slightly down from past years due to COVID-19 school shutdowns during spring*);
 - 617 students were provided BrainSTEPS consultation & training in 2020.
- 5,568 students have been served since the inception of BrainSTEPS:
- Referrals came from the following individuals in 2020:
 - School staff – 69%;
 - Families- 12%;
 - Rehabilitation professionals-11%;
 - Medical professionals– 5%;
 - Other/Advocates – 3%;
- Gender: Male 47%, Female, 53%
- Type/Severity of student brain injury referrals:
 - Concussions/mild TBIs –69%;
 - Moderate or Severe TBIs –17%;
 - Non-TBIs –14%;
- Most prevalent grades at referral were 9th (48), 10th (46), and 11th (49) graders;
- Most prevalent ages at injury are 14 (41), 15 (52), 16 (39), & 17 (39);
- Students were referred from 48 counties and 158 school systems, which include private, parochial, charter, and cyber schools; and
 - Over 3,000 *Return to Learn Concussion Management Teams* across the Commonwealth have been trained by BrainSTEPS since 2013. These teams are specialized to help academically monitor concussions during the initial weeks of recovery. If symptoms persist beyond 4-6 weeks, students are referred by the school to their regional BrainSTEPS team for continued higher-level brain injury consultation until graduation, even if the student recovers.

Public Awareness:

Brain Injury Trainings

The Department of Health has partnered with BIAPA to provide training and technical assistance to individuals likely to work with justice-involved youth and older adults with brain injury. Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania delivered seventeen trainings, provided technical assistance to five organizations, and presented at two conferences and one webinar. Groups who received trainings and technical assistance included a variety of juvenile justice professionals and facilities and eldercare providers and facilities.

Brain Injury Resource Line (BIRL) #1-800-444-6443

The BIRL is maintained by the Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania (BIAPA). It is designed to give resource information to all who call. The BIRL is staffed by eight trained volunteers who work as a team and participate in ongoing training to increase their capacity to assist callers. The team of volunteers participates in an in-person training annually at the BIAPA conference. A new volunteer from Western PA was added to the team this year.

BIAPA, in collaboration with the Department of Health, reviewed and updated the existing manual of resources used by BIAPA's BIRL volunteers, and created an online database of resources that can be used not only by those who respond to BIRL callers, but also by those who provide NeuroResource Facilitation.

Support Groups

Brain injury support groups are the front-line tool of affiliation for individuals with brain injury and their families. BIAPA maintains contact with these support groups to provide information and support as needed and works with individuals to start new groups in the communities where they live.

There are 52 support groups listed on the BIAPA website. Some counties have multiple support groups, while many counties in rural Pennsylvania have no support groups. Support group facilitators were invited to a networking luncheon to share ideas at the BIAPA conference.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the groups did not hold in-person meetings from mid-March through the end of the year. Many held virtual meetings, and BIAPA offered technical assistance to help make that happen. A listing of groups meeting virtually was posted on the BIAPA website and a link to the list is included in each month of the BIAPA e-newsletter. BIAPA formed a "pop-up" support group through video conference that is open to survivors and their supporters statewide.

Council on Brain Injury (CoBI) 2020 Annual Review

CoBI received a grant from BIAPA and the PA Department of Health to offer some creative things to community organizations. This grant was intended to support in-person activities targeting children with brain injuries during the first half of 2020. The identified projects were with Fighting Back (fitness scholarships), the Bucks County Intermediate Unit (in-school concussion support groups and expansion of BI education/support to post-secondary schools including colleges/universities), as well as ReDiscoverU. All projects focused on youth with special needs, and all had to be adapted to meet COVID-19 restrictions.

In response to the pandemic, 2020 saw CoBI's small group of volunteers turn their focus to supporting the CoBI community through virtual connections. While not our preferred way, we provided some great resources through our Strive and Thrive Facebook Group and lots of great ReDiscoverU Zoom Share Nights and classes, which everyone seemed to appreciate and enjoy. The frequency of ReDiscoverU was increased to weekly meetings.

This year, CoBI awarded more than \$3500 to Pennsylvania support groups, and have been working hard with our partners to help adapt granted projects for this year of special circumstances. CoBI awarded nearly \$35,000 in grants to organizations across the tri-state area. Awardees are listed on the next page.

CoBI's Educational programs, CoBI Clinical Forum and CoBI Annual Conference (Pittsburgh) did not take place in 2020 due to the pandemic. The Clinical Forum will resume in 2021 with three virtual trainings planned. CoBI's Clinical Forums are free of charge and also help ACBIS certified individuals earn their necessary contact hours.

Using public health guidance to keep everyone safe, CoBI's annual golf tournament in September was a great success. David's Drive is critical as this fundraiser supports our efforts throughout the year - we were grateful to have amazing weather and great company. This year's CoBI Awards, which were given during David's Drive, went to Cristabelle Braden for her ongoing work as a brain injury advocate and supporter, and the Brain Injury Association of America for their work to provide guidance and leadership to the brain injury community. Both of these awardees were also recognized for the impact that they have had during the pandemic.

Our annual John Savelloni All Abilities Golf Clinic was replaced this year by a virtual golf putting clinic, available by video link. Golf professional Doug Hendricks led a group of participants in a putting clinic and we recorded this terrific instruction in a video - available on our website or at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x2jE90JzwU&feature=youtu.be&eType>EmailBlastContent&eId=660ba705-4f0a-4216-8c46-4722df7fd908>

CoBI was fortunate to have the support of many sponsors and donors during this difficult year. We are especially grateful for the support we received from Piazza Subaru of Limerick as we were again their hometown charity during the Share the Love campaign; USI Insurance, Alliant Employee Benefits, Oliver Heating & Cooling, Astor Weiss, Kaplan & Mandel, LLC, and ReMed in Partnership with Learning Services.

CoBI in Action—We love how our partners have adapted and continue to reach out in a safe way!

- Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey
 - Funds to expand and support outreach post-COVID www.bianj.org
- Brain Injury Association of PA
 - Funds to adapt and scholarship survivors and families for the annual conference
www.biapa.org
- Camp Cranium
 - “Camp-in-a-Box”, virtual camp for children with brain injury
www.campcranium.org
- Fighting Back
 - Fitness Scholarships, virtual training
www.fightingbacksp.org
- Harcum College
 - Support for the expansion of its preceptor program to brain injury settings
- Hope After Head Injury
 - A new lens for even better videos!
www.hopeafterheadinjury.com
- Magee Rehabilitation Hospital Foundation
 - Supporting the art therapy program
www.mageerehab.org
- Nancy's House
 - A phone-in support group targeting families/caregivers of individuals with brain injuries
www.Nancys-house.org
- Project Green Heart Foundation
 - Creating care baskets and information for families with adolescents in the hospital with brain injuries. Created by a family who has been there...
- ReDiscoverU
 - Virtual classes on all kinds of topics—from yoga to art to rock climbing,
www.councilonbraininjury.org
- RESTART your Life/RENEW your Mind
 - Survivor Nights Out, snacks, incidentals, and sanitizer www.restartlife.net
- Salus University--Speech language pathology free clinic and treatment group, adapted for telehealth
- The Jazz Sanctuary, Inc.
www.thejazzsanctuary.com

- Three Rivers Adapted Sports
www.traspa.org

We are honored to support these worthy organizations as they continue to be critical to preventing, understanding, and ultimately improving the lives of those affected by brain injury.

www.councilonbraininjury.org

484-595-9300 x 145

PATS Concussion Education Program:

Through a grant with the PA Department of Health, the Pennsylvania Athletic Trainers' Society (PATS) continued on their plan to identify, address and eliminate health disparities in the populations served by Title V, specifically concussion education for youth in 6th grade and under who participate in sports and those individuals affiliated with these youth sports. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic presentations were limited due to government restrictions.

The PATS work plan provides educational trainings throughout all of Pennsylvania (PA), both rural and urban areas, both of which experience significant health disparities. Further, by taking a statewide approach PATS is educating all affiliated with our selected population, the best practices in concussion identification and management will result in more health equity for all young athletes in PA. The PATS plan will help all young athletes with concussions achieve better health outcomes and eliminate health disparities. Highlights:

PATS collaborated with Sports Safety International (SSI) to launch the **PATS Concussion Toolbox App**

- The **FREE** App is available in IOS and Android formats by entering PATS Concussion Toolbox in the AppStore or Google Play.
- The PATS Concussion Toolbox App is designed for coaches, parents and athletes participating in youth sports throughout the Commonwealth.
- The App includes ConcussionWise training courses for coaches, parents and athletes and includes FAQs, Concussion signs and symptoms and information about PATS and Athletic Trainers.

Additionally, in partnership with SSI PATS provided concussion education:

- **36** CWI's were trained or renewed based on a first come first served basis.
- **68** total presentations have been made by 23 different CWIs.
- **2,554** attendees including **99** coaches, **43** parents and **2,432** athletes participating in youth sports in 6th grade and below were educated about concussions.

- PATS partnered with iHeart Radio to provide Public Service Announcements (PSAs) regarding the AT's role in concussion education to youth sports participants throughout the Commonwealth in conjunction with the PA DOH and SSI.
- The PSAs were broadcast on numerous iHeart radio outlets throughout the Commonwealth from **March through May** resulting in **625,000** media impressions and again **October through November** for **669,643** media impressions and totaling in **1,294,643** media impressions.

The Pennsylvania Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS) Prevention Program

(<http://www.health.pa.gov/shakenbabypogram> #1-717-772-2763) - The SBS Prevention Program is an injury prevention program supported by the Department. PA Hospitals and birthing centers are required per Act 2001-176, to provide parents with specific educational materials related to the risks and consequences of shaken baby or infant head trauma. The Department oversees the distribution and use of these materials. The Department continues to provide technical assistance to hospitals and birthing centers concerning the requirements of Act 2001-176.

For additional information or inquiries regarding Brain Injury services in Pennsylvania, please contact or go online at:

PA Dept of Health Head Injury Program (HIP) #1-717-772-2763 (8:30 AM – 4PM)

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/programs/Pages/Head-Injury.aspx>

PA Dept of Health NeuroResource Facilitation Program (NRFP) #1-717-772-2763 (8:30 am – 4:00 pm)

<http://neuroresource.health.pa.gov>

Brain Injury Help Line #1-866-412-4755

Brain Injury Resource Line (BIRL) #1-800-444-6443

BIAPA #1-866-635-7097

www.biapa.org

Disability Rights Pennsylvania #1-800-692-7443

www.disabilityrightspa.org

PA Health Law Project #800-274-3258

www.phlp.org

**The Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board meetings are open to the public.
If you would be interested in attending a meeting, please contact Erika Pae,
Dept. of Health: epae@pa.gov; # 717-547-3338.**