Ten Questions to Ask Youth Sports Organizations, by Dr. Gioia

In whatever sport you and your child choose, to feel more comfortable and confident with your child's participation as it relates to concussion risk, do your homework and ask questions of the league and its coaches about how they handle head safety. As a parent, you need to feel at ease that safety of the youth athletes is a priority. We encourage parents to ask these 10 questions.

1. Does the league have a general policy in how they manage concussions?
2. Does the league have access to healthcare professionals with knowledge and training in sport-related concussion?
3. Are the coaches required to take a concussion education and training course?
4. Who is responsible for the sideline concussion recognition and response to suspected concussions during practice and games?
5. Do the coaches have readily available the tools – concussion signs & symptoms cards, clipboards, fact sheets, smartphone apps, etc. – during practice and games to guide proper recognition and response of a suspected concussion?
6. Does the league provide concussion education for the parents, and what is the policy for informing parents of suspected concussions?
7. What is the policy regarding allowing a player to return to play? [Correct answer – when an appropriate medical professional provides written clearance that the athlete is fully recovered and ready to return.]
8. Does the league teach/ coach proper techniques (e.g., blocking and tackling in football, checking in hockey and lacrosse) in a way that are "head safe" by not putting the head in position to be struck? If the player does demonstrate unsafe technique during practice or a game, do the coaches re-instruct them with the proper technique/ method? Is head and neck strengthening taught?
9. If a contact sport, are there limitations to the amount of contact? How often (# days per week, # minutes per practice) do you practice with live contact? Is that any different than past years?
10. How amenable is the league/ team / coach to accepting feedback from parents about their child's safety as it relates to head safety?