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Each year, more than 4,000 of Pennsylvania's children survive traumatic brain injuries significant enough to require hospitalization. Many of these children are left with life-altering difficulties in physical, cognitive, or behavioral functioning.

## What is TBI?

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), also called acquired brain injury or simply head injury, occurs when a sudden trauma causes damage to the brain. The damage can be confined to one area of the brain or involve more than one area.

## What are the signs and symptoms of TBI?

Symptoms of a TBI can be mild, moderate, or severe, depending on the extent of the damage to the brain. Some symptoms may be evident immediately, while others may not surface until several days or weeks after the injury.

**A person with a mild TBI may remain conscious or may lose consciousness for a few seconds or minutes.** Other symptoms of mild TBI include headache, confusion, lightheadedness, dizziness, blurred



vision or tired eyes, ringing in the ears, bad taste in the mouth, fatigue or lethargy, a change in sleep patterns, behavioral or mood changes, and trouble with memory, concentration, attention, or thinking.

**A person with moderate or severe TBI may show these same symptoms,** but may also have a headache that gets worse or does not go away, repeated vomiting or nausea, convulsions or seizures, inability to waken from sleep, dilation of one or both pupils of the eyes, slurred speech, weakness or numbness in the extremities, loss of coordination and/or increased confusion, restlessness, or agitation.



## What is the BrainSTEPS Consulting Team?

BrainSTEPS is a "Brain Injury School Re-Entry" model that is being established across Pennsylvania. BrainSTEPS Consulting Teams are composed of professionals from various disciplines who have received extensive training on educating students with Traumatic Brain Injury. Team members will act as consultants for school districts in Berks County and may also provide basic training and resources to colleagues and families as needed.

The Berks County BrainSTEPS Consulting Team was trained by the Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania, through a Title V

Grant from the PA Department of Health, partnered with the PA Department of Education. The team members have formed into a Child and Adolescent Brain Injury School Re-Entry Program called "BrainSTEPS."

BrainSTEPS is working to ensure that those who provide educational support to children with brain injury have a good understanding that will help those students achieve optimal educational success.

## How are referrals made to the BrainSTEPS Team?

The BrainSTEPS Team will accept referrals from school districts, agencies, parents, physicians, early intervention service providers, or any other service providers within Berks County.

## Direct referrals to:

**Natalie Avenoso**  
Berks County Intermediate Unit  
1111 Commons Blvd.  
P.O. Box 16050  
Reading, PA 19612-6050  
610-987-8311  
natave@berksiu.org

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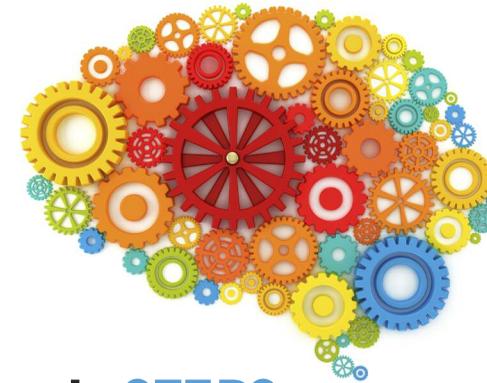
## Who may need the BrainSTEPS Team?

- Any student who suffers a mild brain injury (concussion)
- Any student who has received a moderate or severe brain injury
- Any student who is already identified by the school as having a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Any teacher, school psychologist, administrator, etc. who has a student with a brain injury and is not sure how to create an optimal learning environment
- Any student who suffers from damage to the brain (e.g., tumor, stroke, aneurysm, near drowning, lightning)



## What does the BrainSTEPS Consulting Team provide?

- Coordinated training and consultation regarding school re-entry planning, IEP development, intervention selection and implementation, and long-term monitoring of students
- Support for schools, students, and families of children with a variety of brain injuries, including closed head injuries, open head injuries, shaken baby syndrome, concussion, etc.
- Consistent and familiar contacts for hospitals and rehabilitation personnel working to successfully transition children back into schools



## BrainSTEPS

Strategies Teaching Educators, Parents & Students

### Consulting Team Members:

**Natalie Avenoso**  
School Psychologist  
Berks County  
Intermediate Unit

**Kathy Githens**  
School Psychologist  
Berks County  
Intermediate Unit

**Alyssa Krebs**  
Speech-Language  
Pathologist  
Good Shepherd  
Rehabilitation Network

**Amy Ruda**  
Speech Language  
Pathologist  
Good Shepherd  
Rehabilitation Network

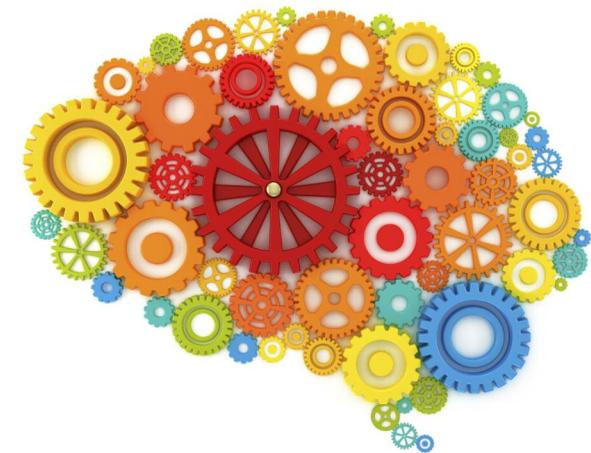
**Dennis Seaman, Ed.D.**  
School Psychologist  
Kutztown Area SD

**Melody Shoemaker, Ph.D.**  
School Psychologist  
Berks County  
Intermediate Unit

**Christine Wendt, RN, BSN**  
Certified School Nurse  
Reading School District

**Karen Walia**  
Parent Team Member

**Laura Zagacki**  
Occupational Therapist  
Good Shepherd  
Rehabilitation Network



## BrainSTEPS

A school re-entry program for  
children with brain injuries

Berks County  
Consulting Team

[www.berksiu.org/BrainSTEPS](http://www.berksiu.org/BrainSTEPS)