

Your Coach Sent You This: Turn an Observation Into the Right Next Step

A private, adult-owned workflow for documenting a coach observation, checking school-day food access, and moving persistent health concerns to qualified care without diagnosing an athlete.

ACCESS

Free resource

AUDIENCE

parent / coach

READ TIME

5 min

AUDIENCE

Parent + Coach

WHY THIS MATTERS

A coach noticed a repeated change and contacted the household.

Your Coach Sent You This: Turn an Observation Into the Right Next Step

QUICK START

Start here

A private, adult-owned workflow for documenting a coach observation, checking school-day food access, and moving persistent health concerns to qualified care...

KEY POINTS

A coach noticed a repeated change and contacted the household. That is an observation,...

- The useful next step is to separate two questions:
- Is there a specific schedule or access gap the household and school can fix?

FIRST, GET THE OBSERVATION IN PLAIN LANGUAGE

Ask the coach for facts rather than an explanation:

- What changed?
- On which dates or sessions did it happen?

CHECK THE ACCESS CHAIN ONCE

Complete this with the athlete; do not complete it about them in a team meeting.

- | Checkpoint | Write the actual answer |
- |---|---|

CONTEXT

Overview

A coach noticed a repeated change and contacted the household. That is an observation, not a diagnosis and not a judgment of your athlete or your family's food.

The useful next step is to separate two questions:

- Is there a specific schedule or access gap the household and school can fix?
- Is there a persistent health change that belongs with a qualified clinician?

Do not ask the coach to answer the second question. Do not ask the athlete to prove that something is wrong.

First, get the observation in plain language

Ask the coach for facts rather than an explanation:

- What changed?
- On which dates or sessions did it happen?

- What did the athlete say, in their own words?
- Was there pain, dizziness, unusual fatigue, repeated illness, distress, or another visible concern?
- What immediate school or team action was taken?

A useful note sounds like: “On Monday and Wednesday, Avery stopped the workout early and reported dizziness. Practice began at 3:20. Avery said lunch was at 10:50 and the school did not allow food in the afternoon class.”

An unhelpful note sounds like: “Avery is under-fueled” or “Avery needs more iron.” Those are conclusions the coach cannot establish.

COMPARISON

Check the access chain once

Checkpoint

- Last available school meal
- Permitted snack opportunity
- Food storage
- Practice start

Write the actual answer

- Time and location
- Time and school rule
- Backpack, locker, classroom, office, or none
- Actual time

When access is not the only issue

Contact the athlete’s pediatrician, sports-medicine clinician, or other appropriate licensed professional when a health change is persistent, recurring, or concerning. Examples worth reporting include recurring bone pain or injury, fainting or near-fainting, chest pain, menstrual change, unusual fatigue that is not resolving, repeated illness, continuing weight change, escalating food rules, or distress around eating.

For collapse, severe breathing difficulty, chest pain, altered behavior, or another immediate safety emergency, use the school emergency action plan or local emergency services rather than waiting for a routine nutrition conversation.

The household does not need to name the condition before making the call. Say what was observed, how long it has been happening, and what changed.

What to bring to qualified care

Bring a short record, not a self-diagnosis:

- dates and the exact observations;
- symptoms the athlete reported;
- recent schedule, training, illness, travel, or injury changes;
- the school-day access table above;
- medications and supplements already used under household or clinical direction;
- menstrual history when relevant and when the athlete is comfortable sharing it privately with care;
- prior injury or laboratory records already available to the household.

The clinician decides what history, examination, testing, treatment, referral, and return-to-sport plan are appropriate. A coach or website should not choose a laboratory panel, interpret a result, recommend a supplement, or set clearance.

What the coach owns

The coach can:

- describe observable changes privately;
- make snack time, storage, water, shade, bathrooms, and travel logistics workable;
- follow school health, heat, emergency, and return-to-participation policy;
- stop weight comments, public food monitoring, plate checks, and team diet rules;
- contact the household through the approved channel;
- follow the plan set by the school’s qualified staff and the athlete’s care team.

The coach does not collect household height, weight, menstrual, meal-log, or clinical data in Aspire and does not diagnose, prescribe, order testing, or clear an athlete.

The one action to take today

“We observed [specific change] on [dates]. The known access gap is [gap or none]. [adult name/role] owns [specific logistics fix or clinical contact] by [date].”

Write one sentence in this format:

That sentence turns concern into an accountable next step without pretending the cause is already known.

Written by Luke Rodriguez, MS, RDN. This page is general education for household adults and coaches. It does not diagnose, prescribe, or replace individualized medical or nutrition care.

COACH LINE

“We observed [specific change] on [dates].

References

- Mountjoy M, Ackerman KE, Bailey DM, et al. IOC consensus statement on Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport (REDs): 2023 update. British Journal of Sports Medicine. 2023;57(17):1073–1097.
- Desbrow B. Youth Athlete Development and Nutrition. Sports Medicine. 2021;51(Suppl 1):3–12.

FAMILY SETUP

What to set up at home this week

Parents do not need a perfect kitchen; they need repeatable defaults.

Stock one breakfast the athlete will actually eat on school mornings.

Choose one lunch add-on and one after-school snack that can be packed fast.

Make the bottle, snack, and recovery food visible the night before.

Use one short family script instead of a long nutrition lecture.

IMPLEMENTATION

What helps home feel easier

Parents need repeatable defaults more than a perfect plan.

What makes home harder

- Long nutrition lectures with too many rules
- No visible defaults for breakfast, snacks, or bottles
- Reacting after the athlete is already hungry or frustrated

What helps

- One short family script
- One repeatable breakfast, snack, and bottle routine
- Preparation the night before practice or school

COMMON MISTAKE TO AVOID

Common mistake to avoid

The home environment does not need to be perfect. It does need to be predictable enough that the athlete can eat, pack, and recover without making a decision from scratch every day.

- Avoid making the athlete guess what happens next.
- Do not bury the plan in a long explanation.
- Make the bottle, snack, and next meal visible before the day gets busy.

WHAT TO DO THIS WEEK

What to do this week

Stock one breakfast the athlete will actually eat.

Pick one after-school snack and one practice bottle routine.

Write one short message the family can repeat instead of re-explaining nutrition.

QUICK REFERENCE

Key targets to keep in view

Use these as planning anchors when you turn the manual into weekly actions.

KEY POINTS

****A coach noticed a repeated change and contacted the household.**** That is an observation, not a diagnosis and not a...

Treat this as a decision anchor, not a trivia stat.

FIRST, GET THE OBSERVATION IN PLAIN LANGUAGE

Ask the coach for facts rather than an explanation:

Treat this as a decision anchor, not a trivia stat.

CHECK THE ACCESS CHAIN ONCE

Complete this with the athlete; do not complete it about them in a team meeting.

Treat this as a decision anchor, not a trivia stat.

COACH TAKEAWAYS

Quick guide

These are the cues worth repeating before the week gets busy.

What the coach owns: The coach can:

describe observable changes privately;

The one action to take today: Write one sentence in this format:

That sentence turns concern into an accountable next step without pretending the cause is already known.

References: Mountjoy M, Ackerman KE, Bailey DM, et al. IOC consensus statement on Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport (REDs): 2023...

Desbrow B. Youth Athlete Development and Nutrition. Sports Medicine. 2021;51(Suppl 1):3–12.

WHAT TO DO NEXT**Use it this week**

Use "Your Coach Sent You This: Turn an Observation Into the Right Next Step" as the one-page recap for this topic.

BOTTOM LINE

A private, adult-owned workflow for documenting a coach observation, checking school-day food access, and moving persistent health concerns to qualified care without...

RELATED TOOL

Parent Night Playbook

Use the reviewed family-facing structure for the conversation.

Source topics: high school runner food access • parent coach nutrition conversation • adolescent athlete referral • runner fatigue parent guide • coach observation athlete health • Your Coach Sent You This: Turn an Observation Into the Right Next Step

Educational use: when Aspire shares this guide as part of a private 1:1 consult, use it with the individualized plan and follow-up instructions from your dietitian. The guide alone does not diagnose a medical condition or replace medical or emergency care. For an athlete under 18, keep a parent or guardian involved in symptoms, supplements, and individualized targets.