HNC Protocol for Health-Care Providers, Coaches and Officials (this primer has been made available to Health-Care Providers and H.S. Wrestling Coaches)

To minimize the risk of injury, additional injury time will be given to a wrestler for the evaluation of a suspected head, neck, cervical column and/or nervous system (“HNC”) injury when an appropriate health-care provider (assigned by the host school) is present for the event (Please review Rule 8-2-4).

- An “appropriate health-care provider” is defined as a M.D., D.O. or ATC (certified athletic trainer).
- Wrestling officials are instructed to meet with the appropriate health-care provider prior to the event to ensure that HNC extended injury time is understood and properly administered. If the official neglects to review HNC protocol with the appropriate health-care provider, the appropriate health-care provider is encouraged to touch base with the official for HNC injury time protocol review.
- The appropriate health-care provider is the only person authorized to request extended injury time for evaluating suspected HNC injuries. Coaches and officials are not authorized to request extended HNC injury time.
- If an appropriate health-care provider is not present at the event, suspected HNC injuries are governed by regular injury time (1½ minutes maximum).
- If the official observes signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion anytime during competition, he/she is obligated by state law to terminate the match and initiate concussion protocol. The afflicted wrestler cannot return to competition on the same day of the removal. The wrestler cannot return to competition (in a multi-day event) until assessed and cleared (by written authorization) by a physician (M.D. or D.O.) or other licensed health-care providers authorized by the school or school district governing body.
- The appropriate health-care provider initiates the extended HNC injury time request to the match official who will instruct the time-keeper that HNC injury time has been authorized.
- The allotted time for suspected HNC injury evaluation is 5-minutes (maximum). HNC injury time is inclusive of any regular injury time that may have elapsed before extended HNC injury time was requested.
- At the conclusion of the HNC evaluation, the appropriate health-care provider determines if the wrestler can return to competition or should be removed from further competition.
- Upon the expiration of the 5-minute HNC extended injury time, the wrestler must immediately return to competition or default the match depending on the results of the HNC evaluation.
- At any time during a match (including the HNC evaluation), if the appropriate health-care provider observes signs, symptoms and behaviors consistent with a concussion, the match will immediately terminate, and concussion protocol initiated.
- A coach or an official cannot overrule the appropriate health-care provider’s decision that the wrestler cannot return to competition.
- If the appropriate health-care provider decides a wrestler can continue, the coach may overrule that decision and default the match.
- Coaching may take place during an HNC evaluation (coaches should be encouraged to permit the health-care provider conduct the HNC evaluation without distractions).
- If a wrestler returns to competition and a second HNC event occurs in the same match, the match is terminated by default. If the second HNC event occurs in a subsequent match, the wrestler may continue the match if cleared by the appropriate health-care provider.
- Extended HNC injury time cannot be used to evaluate non-HNC injuries (e.g., shoulder, knee, etc.).

Toby Dunlap
Director of Officiating Development – Wrestling
OHSAA