

## CONCUSSION REGULATIONS – UPDATED FOR 2020-21

DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION – APRIL 26, 2013

### Implementation of State Law and NFHS Playing Rules Related to Concussion and Concussed Athletes and Return to Play Protocol

**Notwithstanding the leading role that the Ohio High School Athletic Association has played in developing policies concerning concussion prevention, recognition and management, in December of 2012, Ohio's Governor Kasich signed into law legislation that was passed by Ohio's 129th General Assembly which incorporated much of what the OHSAA regulations previously mandated. This law adds several aspects to previous OHSAA regulations. Therefore, to be fully compliant with this law as signed by our Governor, modifications have been made to OHSAA policy. These modifications are set forth in these updated Concussion Regulations.**

It is important for all individuals involved in interscholastic athletics to recognize the potential for catastrophic injury and even death from concussions. Thus, it is extremely important that each coach, administrator, contest official and medical support personnel review their responsibilities in protecting students. Further both students and parents have responsibilities in this area as well.

**Note:** It has always been the ultimate responsibility of the coaching staff, in all sports, to ensure that students are only put into practice or contests if they are physically capable of performing. However, all individuals involved in the conduct of interscholastic competition have responsibilities in this endeavor.

In January 2011, the OHSAA Board of Directors adopted a sports regulation which incorporated the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) playing rules related to concussion recognition and management. On April 26, 2013, legislation adopted by Ohio's General Assembly on concussion and head injuries in youth sports became effective. On February 14, 2013, the OHSAA Board of Directors mandated that these regulations become effective on April 26, 2013 for the remainder of the spring sports season and thereafter. This OHSAA regulation, as amended to incorporate this recent legislation, now reads:

Any student, while practicing for or competing in an interscholastic contest, who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with having sustained a concussion or head injury (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion or balance problems) shall be immediately removed from the practice or contest by either of the following:

- 1) The individual who is serving as the student's coach during that practice or competition.
- 2) An individual who is serving as a contest official or referee during that practice or competition.

## **RETURN TO PLAY PROTOCOL**

If a student is removed from practice or competition due to a suspected concussion or head injury, the coach or referee who removes the student shall not permit the student, **ON THE SAME DAY THE STUDENT IS REMOVED**, to return to that practice or competition or to participate in any other practice or competition for which the coach or contest official is responsible. Thereafter, which means no earlier than the next day, the coach or contest officials shall not permit the student to return to practice or competition until both of the following conditions are satisfied:

- 1) The student's condition is assessed by either of the following:
  - a. A physician, who is a person authorized under Chapter 4731 of the Ohio Revised Code (OCR) to practice medicine and surgery or osteopathic medicine or surgery (M.D. or D.O.)
  - b. Any other licensed health care provider that the school district board of education or other governing authority of a chartered or non-chartered nonpublic school, authorizes to assess the student who has been removed from practice or competition.
- 2) The student receives **written authorization** that it is safe for the student to return to practice or competition from a physician or other licensed health care provider authorized to grant the clearance. Click here <http://ohsaa.org/medicine/AuthorizationToReenter.pdf> to retrieve the OHSAA's Medical Authorization to Return To Play (RTP) form.

A school district board of education or governing authority of a chartered or non-chartered nonpublic school may authorize a licensed health care provider who is NOT a PHYSICIAN to make an assessment and grant authorization for a student to return to participation ONLY if the provider is acting in accordance with one of the following as applicable to the provider's authority to practice in Ohio:

- 1) In consultation with a physician;
- 2) Pursuant to the referral of a physician;
- 3) In collaboration with a physician, or
- 4) Under the supervision of a physician.

Note: A physician or other licensed health care provider who makes an assessment or grants clearance for a student to return to participation may be a volunteer.

## **COACHES REQUIRMENTS**

All coaches, paid and volunteer, must possess a current Department of Education-issued Pupil Activity Program/Coaching Permit. When renewing this permit, the coach will be required to complete an online concussion education course as stipulated in the section entitled **Approved Online Concussion Education Course**. This course is valid for three years.

## **CONTEST OFFICIALS REQUIRMENTS**

**New legislation signed into law by the Governor provides that no school "shall permit" an individual to referee interscholastic athletic contests unless the individual holds a Pupil Activity Program/Coaching Permit or has successfully completed within the last three years a**

**training program in concussion recognition.** Therefore, all OHSAA licensed officials shall possess either a current Department of Education-issued Pupil Activity Program/Coaching Permit or **show evidence of completing an approved online concussion education course** as stipulated in the section entitled **Approved Online Concussion Education Courses.** This course is valid for three years from the date of completion.

### **STUDENT AND PARENT REQUIREMENTS**

All students and their parents or legal guardians shall review and sign the “Concussion Information Sheet” which has been developed by the Ohio Department of Health and which shall be distributed by OHSAA member schools to all students and their parents prior to each sports season. Students and parents shall review and sign this form each year and should keep a copy of the form. In addition, parents and students are encouraged to complete an approved concussion education course. The Concussion Information Sheet can be found here:

<http://www.healthyohioprogram.org/~media/HealthyOhio/ASSETS/Files/injury%20prevention/concussion/Interscholastic%20Concussion%20Form%20-%20ODH%20Revised%202.ashx>

### **APPROVED ONLINE CONCUSSION EDUCATION COURSES**

**The following free online training courses have been approved by the Ohio Department of Health for coaches and contest officials:**

**National Federation of State High School Associations Concussion in Sports - What you Need to Know:** <http://www.nfhslearn.com/electiveDetail.aspx?courseID=38000>

(This free online course is available through the NFHS. Click the “order here” button, and complete a brief registration form to take the course. Follow these steps to complete the course:

1. Click on the button that says “Please Login to Order.” In the window that appears, click “Register Now.”
2. When your registration is complete, you may “order” the free concussion course offered along the left-hand side of the page. Continue following prompts. Although it may look like you will be charged for the course, there is no cost.
3. Once you've completed “Checkout,” you will be able to take the free online course.
4. When you have completed and passed the course, you have the option of printing a certificate of completion.
5. All Ohio Officials should select this option to print, retain a copy of the certificate and carry it with them to all contests.

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Heads Up Concussion in Youth Sports On-Line Training Program:** [http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/online\\_training.html](http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/online_training.html)-

**PLEASE NOTE:** Both courses offer a “certificate of completion” upon successful passage. The NFHS course allows organizations to search for and [track coaches and other individuals such as contest officials who have completed the course](#), while the CDC course does not.

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

1. What are the “signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion?” The National Federation rule lists some of the signs, symptoms and behaviors consistent with a concussion. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has published the following list of signs, symptoms and behaviors that are consistent with a concussion:

SIGNS OBSERVED BY OTHERS	SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY ATHLETE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appears dazed or stunned</li> <li>• Is confused about assignment</li> <li>• Forgets plays</li> <li>• Is unsure of game, score, or opponent</li> <li>• Moves clumsily</li> <li>• Answers questions slowly</li> <li>• Loses consciousness</li> <li>• Shows behavior or personality changes</li> <li>• Cannot recall events prior to hit</li> <li>• Cannot recall events after hit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Headache</li> <li>• Nausea</li> <li>• Balance problems or dizziness</li> <li>• Double or fuzzy vision</li> <li>• Sensitivity to light or noise</li> <li>• Feeling sluggish</li> <li>• Feeling foggy or groggy</li> <li>• Concentration or memory problems</li> <li>• Confusion</li> </ul>

2. **Who is responsible for administering this rule?**

All individuals who have responsibilities and duties in the interscholastic athletics environment are responsible: coaches, contest officials, administrators, students, parents and medical personnel.

3. **What is the role of coaches in administering this rule?**

- Coaches are to review and know the signs and symptoms of concussion and to prohibit any athlete who displays these signs or symptoms from participating in a practice or a contest.
- Coaches are not medical professionals and have no authority to determine whether or not a student has sustained a concussion. The coach is responsible for insuring that the student’s parents are notified and the student is referred to a medical professional.
- Coaches shall be aware that any student removed from a practice or a contest due to a suspected concussion or head injury **shall not return to participation on the same day as the removal.**
- Coaches shall possess a current Pupil Activity Program/Coaching Permit and shall take one of the approved online concussion courses upon renewal of the permit.

4. **What is the role of contest officials in administering the rule?**

- Officials are to review and know the signs and symptoms of concussion and to direct immediate removal of any student who displays these signs or symptoms. When informing the head coach about removal of an athlete, the official shall be accompanied by another (second) official if possible.
- An official **shall not permit the athlete who has been removed under this rule to return to competition that same day.**
- If a contest official is aware that a student has been permitted to return to competition on the same day as removal, that official shall immediately stop play and remove that student from competition and report the incident to the OHSAA.
- Note that officials are not medical professionals and have no authority to determine whether or not a student has sustained a concussion. The official is responsible for

directing removal when he or she observes signs and symptoms that may indicate a student is concussed.

- All Officials shall possess either a current Pupil Activity Program/Coaching Permit or shall complete one of the online concussion courses which are valid for three years from the date of completion.
- At initial licensure or renewal of the OHSAA officiating permit, the official shall indicate that he or she has either a current Pupil Activity Program/Coaching Permit or has completed one of the approved online concussion courses.
- All officials should carry with them evidence of completion of one of these options at all times while officiating a contest.
- Officials are required to submit to the OHSAA the “OHSAA Concussion Report” within 48 hours whenever a student has been removed from a contest under this regulation.

**5. What are the expectations of student-athletes in concussion management?**

- While all individuals involved in the interscholastic athletics program have a responsibility to recognize the potential for catastrophic injury and even death from concussions, it is also the responsibility of student-athletes to recognize the signs, symptoms and behaviors consistent with a concussion.
- Student-athletes who exhibit symptoms such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion or balance problems, have the responsibility to report these immediately to their coach and/or health care professional. Teammates also share the responsibility to report these symptoms when they are exhibited by a fellow student-athlete.
- Student-athletes shall review and sign, on an annual basis, along with their parents or legal guardians, the Ohio Department of Health’s Concussion Information Sheet found on the OHSAA website and at this link  
<http://www.healthyohioprogram.org/~media/HealthyOhio/ASSETS/Files/injury%20prevention/concussion/Interscholastic%20Concussion%20Form%20-%20ODH%20Revised%202.ashx>

**6. Who decides if an athlete has not been concussed and/or who has recovered from a concussion?**

- **Only** an M.D. (Medical Doctor), D.O. (Doctor of Osteopathy), or another health care provider approved by the school’s Board of Education or other governing body who is acting in accordance with one of the following as applicable to the provider’s authority to practice in Ohio:

- 1) In consultation with a physician;
- 2) Pursuant to the referral of a physician;
- 3) In collaboration with a physician;
- 4) Under the supervision of a physician.

is empowered to make the on-site determination that an athlete has **not** received a concussion. **Even if that determination has been made, however, the student may not return to practice or competition on the same day he/she has been removed from a practice or competition** (see No. 7 below).

- If any one of these physicians or authorized medical providers has answered that

“yes” there has been a concussion, that decision is final.

7. **Can an athlete return to play on the same day as he/she has been removed from a practice or competition for a suspected concussion?**
  - No, under no circumstances can that athlete return to play that day.
  - No coach or contest official shall allow a student to return to practice or to competition on any day after the initial removal until that student has been assessed and cleared for return with **written authorization** by a physician or licensed health care provider authorized by the school.
  - If the event continues over multiple days, then the designated event physician has ultimate authority over return to play decisions.
8. **Once the day has concluded, who can issue authorization to return to practice/competition in the sport for a student who has diagnosed with a concussion?**
  - Once a concussion has been diagnosed by a physician or other approved health care provider, only a physician or approved provider can authorize subsequent Return To Play (RTP), and such authorization shall be in writing to the administration of the school. This written **RTP authorization shall be kept at the school indefinitely** as a part of that student’s permanent record. Click here <http://ohsaa.org/medicine/AuthorizationToReenter.pdf> to access the OHSAA “Medical Authorization to Return to Play” Form.
  - School administration shall then notify the coach as to the permission to return to practice or play.
9. **What should be done after the student is cleared by an appropriate health care professional?**
  - After a clearance has been issued, the student’s actual return to practice and play should follow a graduated protocol.
  - The National Federation of State High School Associations has included the following graduated protocol in its Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion in Sports: (**Note:** This is simply a suggested protocol. The appropriate health care professional who issues the clearance may wish to establish a different graduated protocol.)

#### **NFHS SUGGESTED MEDICAL CLEARANCE RETURN TO PLAY PROTOCOL**

1. No exertional activity until asymptomatic.
2. When the athlete appears clear, begin low-impact activity such as walking, stationary bike, etc.
3. Initiate aerobic activity fundamental to specific sport such as running or skating, and may also begin progressive strength training activities.
4. Begin non-contact skill drills specific to sport such as dribbling, fielding, batting, etc.
5. Full contact in practice setting.
6. Game play/competition.
  - Athlete must remain asymptomatic to progress to the next level. (It is often suggested that an athlete not be allowed to progress more than one level per day.)
  - If symptoms recur, athlete must return to previous level and should be reevaluated

by an appropriate health care professional.

- Medical check should occur before contact. (Final written clearance from the medical professional shall be obtained before the athlete engages in any unrestricted or full contact activity.)

### **QUICK LINKS FROM THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

**Ohio Department of Health Concussion Information Sheet -**

**<http://www.healthyohioprogram.org/~media/HealthyOhio/ASSETS/Files/injury%20prevention/concussion/Interscholastic%20Concussion%20Form%20-%20ODH%20Revised%202.ashx>**

**Online Concussion Management Training -**

**<http://www.healthyohioprogram.org/concussion.aspx#Training>**

**Ohio's Return to Play Law: Frequently Asked Questions -**

**<http://www.healthyohioprogram.org/~media/HealthyOhio/ASSETS/Files/injury%20prevention/concussion/Frequently%20Asked%20Questions%20Updated%202513.ashx>**

**Ohio's Return to Play Law: What Coaches and Referees Need to Know -**

**<http://www.healthyohioprogram.org/~media/HealthyOhio/ASSETS/Files/injury%20prevention/concussion/Return%20to%20Play%20-%20What%20Coaches%20Need%20to%20Know%20-%20School%20Sports%20-%20Final.ashx>**

**Ohio's Return to Play Law: What Parent/Guardians Need to Know -**

**<http://www.healthyohioprogram.org/~media/HealthyOhio/ASSETS/Files/injury%20prevention/concussion/Return%20to%20Play%20-%20What%20Parents-Guardians%20Need%20to%20Know%20-%20School%20Sports%20-%20Final.ashx>**

### **ADDITIONAL CONCUSSION RESOURCES**

**Ohio Department of Health, Violence and Injury Prevention Program - Sports/Recreation Traumatic Brain Injuries - <http://www.healthyohioprogram.org/vipp/child/tbi.aspx>**

**CDC Heads Up: Concussion in Youth Sports**

**Nationwide Children's Hospital – Concussion Information Toolkit -**

**<http://www.nationwidechildrens.org/concussion-toolkit>**

**CDC Materials on Returning to School for Parents, School Nurses and Educators -**

**<http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/schools.html>**

**Ohio Legislative Service Commissioner HB 143 Bill Analysis - <http://www.lsc.state.oh.us/analyses129/12-hb143-129.pdf>**

**Brain Injury Association of Ohio – [www.biaoh.org](http://www.biaoh.org)**