

CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT

Concussions are a serious and growing public health concern, especially for students participating in contact sports. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, at least 300,000 sports and recreation related concussions occur in the United State each year. The competitive athletic culture of playing through pain or “toughing it out” puts student-athletes at serious risk of brain injury, disability and death.

Allowing the student-athlete to return to play before recovering from a concussion increases the chance of more serious brain injury that can result in severe disability and/or death.

The effects of concussion, while not all preventable, can be mitigated by proper recognition and appropriate response. Therefore, the Old Tappan School District shall require that:

- A. A. Student-athletes and coaches employed by the school district shall receive annual training relating to concussions.
- B. All coaches, school nurses, school/team physicians and certified athletic trainers must complete an interscholastic head injury training program such as the Annual National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) online “Concussion in Sports” training program or a comparable program that meets mandated criteria
- C. The athletic head injury training program must include:
 - 1. The recognition of the symptoms of head and neck injuries, concussions, and injuries related to second impact syndrome; and
 - 2. A description of the need for appropriate time to delay the return to sports competition or practice of a student–athlete who has sustained a concussion or other head injury, but if no additional time is specified for a particular age-group or sport, the student-athlete may return when written medical clearance is given to the student-athlete stating that he/she is asymptomatic, and the student-athlete has completed an appropriate graduated individualized return-to-play protocol.
- D. Any student-athlete suspected of sustaining a concussion or exhibiting or complaining of concussion related symptoms or any student-athlete that has sustained a concussion or has become unconscious during a practice or athletic contest be removed from play and not return to play that day.
- E. A medical evaluation must be performed by certified athletic trainer (ATC) and/or school doctor or other certified and approved medical personnel to determine the presence or absence of a concussion.
- F. If a student-athlete is diagnosed with a concussion there shall be a minimum of a 7 day wait before returning to activity. In addition, the student-athlete must be free of all concussion symptoms for 7 days prior to return to activity.
- G. Upon clearance for return to activity by the student’s primary care physician or school physician, the coach, working in conjunction, shall implement a gradual and acclimated return to activity following Zurich Consensus Statement Guidelines.

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- H. The coach keeps the timeline for return to activity. The return to the first full activity shall be at a practice.
- I. Parents/guardians annually receive and submit the District's Concussion Policy Acknowledgement Form prior to the student's participation in any athletic practice or event. The form shall be submitted electronically whenever possible.
- J. The Superintendent shall develop specific regulations for return to play in concert with the ATC and the concussion trained doctors.
- K. The NJ Department of Education Concussion and Head Injury fact sheet and the district's Concussion Policy Acknowledgement Form (5141.23-E) shall be distributed to every student-athlete who participates in interscholastic sports and his/ her parents who shall sign and submit the form, prior to the student's participation in any athletic practice or event and kept on file for future reference. The form shall be submitted electronically whenever possible.
- L. The Superintendent shall develop specific regulations for return to play in concert with the ATC and the concussion trained doctors.

The signs and symptoms of concussion also impact student-athletes in their academic pursuits. This can cause deleterious effect on their ability to function in the classroom, learn new material, complete homework, and study for tests. The District shall ensure that the appropriate staff are made aware of the condition and accommodate the student athlete's symptoms as they would with any other illness.

Because activities that require concentration and attention may exacerbate post-concussion symptoms and delay recovery, while symptomatic student-athletes who have sustained concussion should limit activities that require attention and concentration such as driving, homework, video-game playing, or texting.

Use of school grounds by youth sports teams

If the District allows youth sports teams to use its athletic facilities in order for the District to be immune from liability for injury or death due to the action or inaction of persons employed by or under contract with a youth sports organization the organization shall provide the District with the following in order to use the fields:

- A. Proof of an insurance policy of an amount of not less than \$50,000 per person, per occurrence insuring the youth sports team organization against liability for any bodily injury suffered by a person;
- B. A statement of compliance with the district's policies for the management of concussions and other head injuries.

A "youth sports team organization" means one or more sports teams organized pursuant to a nonprofit or similar charter or which are member teams in a league organized by or affiliated with a county or municipal recreation department.

This policy shall be reviewed annually to ensure that it incorporates the most current information and practices.

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Legal References: N.J.S.A. 18A:16-6, -6.1 Indemnity of officers and employees against civil actions
N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.6 et seq. Parents Right to Conscience Act of 1979
N.J.S.A. 18A:40-1 Employment of medical inspectors, optometrists and nurses; salaries; terms; rules
N.J.S.A. 18A:40-3 Lectures to teachers
N.J.S.A. 18A:40-5 Method of examination; notice to parent or guardian
N.J.S.A. 18A:40-6 In general
N.J.S.A. 18A:40-7, -8, -10, -11 Exclusion of students who are ill
N.J.S.A. 18A:40-23 et seq. Nursing Services for Nonpublic School Students
N.J.S.A. 18A:40-41.4 Removal of student athlete from competition, practice; return
N.J.A.C. 6A:16-1.1et seq. Programs to Support Student Development
See particularly:
N.J.A.C. 6A:16-1.1, -1.3, -2.1, -2.3, -2.4
N.J.A.C. 6A:26-12.1 et seq. Operation and Maintenance of School Facilities
See particularly:
N.J.A.C. 6A:26-12.3

Plainfield Board of Education v. Cooperman, 105 NJ 587 (1987)

Cross References: *5141 Health
*5141.1 Accidents
*5141.2 Illnesses
*5141.3 Health examinations and immunizations
*5141.21 Administering medication
*6142.4 Physical education and health
*6145 Extra-curricular activities
*6145.1/6145.2 Intramural competition; interscholastic competition

Key Words

Concussions, Removal from athletic practice or Games, Return to Athletic Participation

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