
CONCUSSIONS AND HEAD INJURIES FOR STUDENT ATHLETES

The School Board recognizes that concussions and head injuries are commonly reported injuries in children and adolescents who participate in sports and other recreational activities. The Board acknowledges the risk of catastrophic injuries or death is significant when a concussion or head injury is not properly evaluated and managed. The Board recognizes that the majority of concussions will occur in “contact” or “collisions” sports. However, in order to ensure the safety of all District student-athletes, this policy will apply to all competitive athletic activities as identified by the administration.

Consistent with the National Federation of High School (NFHS) and the New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association (NHIAA), the District will utilize recommended guidelines, procedures and other pertinent information to inform and educate coaches, youth athletes, and parents/guardians of the nature and risk of concussions or head injuries, including the dangers associated with continuing to play after a concussion or head injury.

Annually, the District will include information about head injuries and concussion information for all parents/ guardians of student-athletes in the Student-Athlete Parent Handbook. This Handbook is agreed to by all parents/guardians during the online registration process for all those participating in competitive sport activities prior to the student-athlete’s initial practice or competition.

All coaches, including volunteers, will complete training as recommended and/or provided by NHIAA, New Hampshire Department of Education and/or other pertinent organizations. Additionally, all coaches of competitive sport activities will comply with NHIAA recommended procedures for the management of head injuries and concussions.

Athletic Director or Administrator in Charge of Athletic Duties

Updating: Each spring, the athletic director or designee shall review any changes that have been made in procedures required for concussion and head injury management or other serious injury by consulting with the NHIAA or the District’s on-call physician, if applicable. If there are any updated procedures, they will be adopted and used for the upcoming school year.

Identified Sports: Identified sports include all NHIAA-sanctioned sports, including cheer squad, and any other District-sponsored sports or activities as determined by the District.

Coach Training: All coaches shall undergo training in head injury and concussion management at least once every two years viewing the NFHS online concussion course.

Parent Information Sheet: On a seasonal basis, concussion and head injury information shall be distributed to the student-athlete and the athlete’s parent/guardian prior to the student-athlete’s initial practice or competition. This information shall be incorporated into the Student-Athlete Parent Handbook which is agreed to during the online registration process by parents/guardians. This is the same process by which parents/guardians grant permission to allow students to participate in co-curricular athletics.

Coach’s Responsibility: A student-athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury or other serious injury in a practice or game shall be immediately removed from play.

Administrative Responsibilities: The Superintendent or his/her designee will keep abreast of changes in standards regarding concussion, explore staff professional development programs relative to concussions, and will explore other areas of education, training and programs.

Removal From Play and Protocol For Return To Play

Any coach, official, licensed athletic trainer, or health care provider who suspects that a student athlete has sustained a concussion or head injury in a practice or game shall immediately remove the student-athlete from play. A student-athlete who has been removed from play shall not return to play on the same day or until he/she is evaluated by a health care provider, including licensed athletic trainers for the district and receives medical clearance and written authorization from that health care provider to return to play. The student-athlete shall also present written permission from a parent/guardian to return to play.

The District may limit a student-athlete's participation as determined by the student's treating health care provider.

Concussion Awareness and Education

To the extent possible, the Board encourages the Administration to implement concussion awareness and education into the District's physical education and/or health education curriculum. The administrative decision will consider all relevant considerations, including time, resources, access to materials, and other pertinent factors.

Academic Issues in Concussed Students

In the event a student is concussed, regardless of whether the concussion was a result of a school-related or non-school-related activity, school District staff should be mindful that the concussion may affect the student's ability to learn. To that end, a Return to Learn Protocol has been developed for all students in the district when diagnosed with a concussion. In the event a student athlete has a concussion, that student's teachers will be notified. Teachers should report to the school nurse if the student appears to have any difficulty with academic tasks that the teacher believes may be related to the concussion. The school nurse will notify the student's parent and treating physician. Administrators and District staff will work to establish a protocol and course of action to ensure the student is able to maintain his/her academic responsibilities while recovering from the concussion.

Section 504 accommodations may be developed in accordance with applicable law and board policies.

Legal References

RSA 200:49, Head Injury Policies for Student Sports

RSA 200:50, Removal of Student-Athlete

Legal References Disclaimer: These references are not intended to be considered part of this policy, nor should they be taken as a comprehensive statement of the legal basis for the Board to enact this policy, nor as a complete recitation of related legal authority. Instead, they are provided as additional resources for those interested in the subject matter of the policy.

Additional Resources:

<http://nhiaa.org/PDFs/3076/SuggestedGuidelinesforManagementofConcussioninSports.pdf>

<http://www.bianh.org/concussion.asp>

<http://www.nashua.edu/Nashua/Media/PDF-files/For%20Students/Concussion-Awareness-for-Parents-and-School-Staff-Flyer.pdf>

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