

**File: JJIF**

## **CONCUSSIONS AND CONCUSSION RECOVERY**

Concussion is an injury to the brain caused by direct or indirect physical trauma that can lead to a wide range of symptoms, from mild to severe, that resolve over a wide range of timespans, from days to years. Because concussions can lead to long-term brain disorders or further serious injury if not recognized and treated properly, and because they can affect the normal ability of a student to learn in school, it is important that School Department staff members are aware of the general features of concussions and concussion recovery, and that there is a clear policy for concussion education, prevention and recovery.

For the purposes of this policy, the word “concussion” shall refer to any head injury, suspected concussion, diagnosed concussion, or presence of signs or symptoms of a concussion, such as the loss of consciousness (even brief).

### **Education**

The Superintendent shall ensure, by delegation of authority if necessary, that student athletes, parents and/or guardians of student athletes, certified athletic trainers, coaches, volunteers, school and team physicians, school nurses, athletic directors, and directors responsible for school marching band(s), receive annual up-to-date education about concussions, concussion prevention, and concussion recovery. Annual training shall include recognition of a sports-related head injury and associated health risks, including second impact syndrome.

Training materials used for this purpose must be approved by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and a record of completion of such training must be kept for each school by the Athletic Director. This record may consist, variously, of a certificate of completion of an on-line DESE-approved course, a signed acknowledgement that an individual has read and understands DESE approved written training materials, an attendance roster from a DESE-approved training session, or another means certified by the Superintendent or his/her designee.

The Athletic Director shall ensure that coaches are sufficiently trained to educate student athletes in the techniques and skills of practice and play, and the use of proper protective equipment, that minimize sports-related head injury. The Athletic Director shall further assure that coaches prohibit athletes from engaging in any unreasonably dangerous athletic technique that endangers the health or safety of an athlete, such as using a helmet or any other sports equipment as a weapon.

### **Physical Exam, Head Injury Record and Baseline Testing**

Prior to participating in any extracurricular athletic activity, the following conditions must be met:

1. The student must undergo a physical examination performed by a qualified physician in order to determine his/her fitness for practice and play. Documentation of such an examination must be kept on file at the school. One qualifying physical exam per school year is sufficient to cover any student participating in multiple sports seasons. However, in the event of any injury requiring professional medical treatment, a new authorization to practice and play must be obtained.
2. The student and at least one parent or legal guardian must complete a DESE-approved training course on head injuries and concussions in extracurricular activities, and furnish the Athletic Director with written proof of such completion.

3. A parent or guardian must complete a DESE Pre-participation Head Injury/Concussion Reporting Form (hereafter Pre-participation Form) on behalf of the student in order to establish or amend the head-injury record of the student.

If at any time during a sports season, a student sustains a head injury or concussion during the season, but not while participating in a school-sponsored extracurricular activity, a parent or guardian must complete a DESE Report of Head Injury During Sports Season Form (hereafter Report of Head Injury Form) and submit it to the Athletic Director.

Prior to the start of practice for any sports season, the school nurse shall review all previous Pre-participation Forms, Report of Head Injury Form(s), head injury or concussion training certificate(s) and the physical examination completion certification of any student wishing to participate in an extracurricular athletic activity. The School Nurse may arrange for the School Physician to review records of any prospective extracurricular athlete with a history of head injury to determine whether further discussion should take place with the child's parents/guardians.

No student who fails to comply with all of the education, reporting and physical exam requirements called for by this policy may participate, or continue to participate, in school-sponsored athletic activities. The Athletic Director, by delegation to a coach if necessary, shall make every reasonable effort to remind students and a parent/guardian, verbally, by email or by telephone, of any noncompliance that will prevent a student from participation. The verbal affirmation and/or signature of a student on any compulsory form or certification shall not be sufficient to authorize participation in a school-sponsored athletic activity; the signature of a parent or guardian is required on all authorizations and reports for validity.

In cases where the primary language of a parent/guardian is not English, the Athletic Director shall ensure that such requests, instructions, and any compulsory forms are appropriately translated.

#### **Concussion Recognition and Recovery**

Any student who, during a practice or competition, sustains a head injury or suspected concussion, or exhibits even slight signs of a concussion, shall be removed from the practice or competition immediately and may not return that day. Recognition of a concussion and subsequent removal from practice or play is a key role of the coach and/or the Athletic Trainer.

The coach shall communicate the nature of the injury directly to the parent/guardian of the student, in person or by telephone, immediately after the practice or competition from which the student has been removed. The coach must also provide this information in writing to the parent/guardian, whether by paper or electronically, by the end of the next business day, but preferably in sufficient time for the written account to be provided to a physician examining the student.

The coach shall communicate, by the end of the next business day, with the Athletic Director and School Nurse that the student has been removed from practice or competition because of a suspected head injury or concussion.

Each student who is removed from practice or competition and subsequently diagnosed with a concussion may trigger the need for a Section 504 plan and/or a written graduated reentry plan for return to full academic and extracurricular athletic activities. Medical documentation confirming the concussion from a student's physician must be provided. This plan may take the form of a Section 504 plan, and shall be in effect until the student is certified to return to practice and play, and normal school work. The 504 plan shall be developed according to standard protocol followed by the Sharon Public Schools.

The primary authority on the concussion-recovery regimen of any injured person is his/her personal physician. School staff must consider seriously the orders of the personal physician in working to assist in the recovery of any concussion victim. School nurses, athletic trainers and coaches are encouraged to direct parents or guardians of a concussion victim to seek the advice of physicians or clinics that specialize in concussion treatment and recovery. However, no such advice may be construed as endorsement of any particular physician or clinic by the Sharon Public Schools.

#### **Medical Clearance and Authorization to Return to Play**

Any return-to-play decision may not be finalized without the affirmative medical opinion of a licensed physician, preferably the primary care physician of the concussion victim.

Any student removed from practice or competition because of a concussion must obtain and return to the Athletic Director the DESE Post Sports-Related Head Injury Medical Clearance and Authorization Form (hereafter Medical Clearance Form), prior to resuming extracurricular athletic activity. This form must be completed by a physician and signed by a parent or guardian.

#### **Record keeping and reporting**

Except where state or local laws provide for a longer period, the School District shall keep the following records of all student athletes for a period of three years:

- Verifications of annual training and receipt of training materials;
- Completed Pre-participation Forms;
- Completed Report of Head Injury Forms;
- Completed Medical Clearance Forms;
- Reentry/Return-to-play plans.

These records must be available for inspection by the DESE at any time.

The School District will maintain and report annual concussion statistics that, at a minimum, track:

- The total number of Report of Head Injury forms received by the school;
- The total number of students who incur head injuries or concussions when engaged in any extracurricular athletic activity.

#### **Penalties**

Coaches are expected to impose sanctions that may include removal from play upon any student who violates rules and acts in such a way as to deliberately endanger the health of another student athlete on any team. The Athletic Director and/or Superintendent will impose appropriate penalties, up to and including termination of employment and legal action, upon any coach who fails to comply with the requirements of this policy.

#### **Biannual Review**

State law requires that the policies and procedures herein be reviewed and updated at least every two years, by September 30, and that the Athletic Director, School Nurse and a Certified Athletic Trainer be involved in such a review.

Established: December 14, 2011

Legal Refs.: 105 CMR 201 Head Injuries and Concussions in Extracurricular Athletic Activities  
M.G.L. 111.222 Interscholastic athletic head injury safety training program

29 U.S.C. §794(a), 34 C.F.R. §104.4(a) 504 plans

Cross Refs.: JJIF-E1 Pre-participation head injury/concussion reporting form for extracurricular activities  
JJIF-E2 Report of head injury during sports season  
JJIF-E3 Post sports-related head injury medical clearance and authorization form

Revised: March 25, 2015