

Concussions and Head Injuries

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.

The district will distribute a head injury and concussion information sheet to all parents/guardians of student-athletes 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 activities, including cheer/dance squads, 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 by one of the following means: (1) through viewing the NHIAA sport-specific rules clinic; or (2) through viewing the NHIAA concussion clinic found on the MHSAA Sports Medicine page at www.mhsa.org.

Parent Information Sheet: A concussion and head injury information sheet shall be distributed to the student-athlete and the athlete's parent/guardian prior to the student-athlete's initial practice or competition.

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 or until he/she is evaluated by a health care provider 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 take into account 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. In the event a student has a concussion, that student's teachers will be notified by the School Nurse. It shall be the parent's responsibility to inform the School Nurse if the student has sustained a non-school related concussion. 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 parents. 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.

NHSBA Note, September 2012: The only changes appear in the "Removal From Play and Protocol For Return To Play" section. The remainder of the policy is unchanged. The revisions in this section mirror the language of RSA 200:49 and RSA 200:50.

Legal References

RSA 200:49, Head Injury Policies for Student Sports

RSA 200:50, Removal of Student-Athlete