

CONCUSSION FACT SHEET FOR ATHLETIC TRAINERS

New Law

A new law “Student Athletes: Concussions and Head Injuries” (IC 20-34-7) will take effect on July 1, 2012. This law requires that schools distribute information sheets to inform and educate coaches, student athletes, and parents of student athletes concerning the nature and risk of concussion and head injury to student athletes, including the risks of continuing to play after concussion or head injury. The law requires that each year, before beginning practice for an interscholastic or intramural sport, a high school student athlete and the student athlete’s parents must be given an information sheet, and both must sign and return a form acknowledging receipt of the information to the student athlete’s coach. The law further states that a high school athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury in a practice or game, shall be removed from play at the time of injury and may not return to play until the student athlete has received a written clearance from a licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and head injuries.

Items to Consider When Developing Your Procedures

1. Discuss the new law requirements and your role with key personnel who could be involved if a student athlete is suspected of having a concussion or head injury – athletic director, principal, medical director, coaches, and school nurse
2. Develop procedures or an action plan of what will occur when an athletic trainer is (or is not) present and a student athlete is suspected of having a concussion
3. Procedures, at a minimum, should consider the following items:
 - Ensure that coaches, athletes and parents are educated about concussions and the appropriate forms are distributed, signed and returned
 - Ensure that if a student athlete is suspected of having a concussion, he/she is removed from play
 - Ensure that the athlete’s parents or guardians are informed about the possible concussion and are given the *“Heads Up” – Concussion in High School Sports – A Fact Sheet for Parents*
 - Ensure that if a concussion is suspected, the athlete is kept out of play the day of the injury and until a licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and head injuries signs and returns the *Concussion Evaluation and Release to Play Form for Licensed Health Care Providers*
 - Ensure that the licensed health care provider’s instructions concerning the return to play recovery/treatment plan is followed
 - Ensure that the athletic director and the school nurse are aware of the suspected concussion and are informed of the recovery/treatment plan

Questions and Answers – Role of Athletic Trainer Regarding the Concussion Law

1. *Can an athletic trainer do an initial assessment of a student athlete that has had a bump, blow or jolt to the head or body?*

Yes, if a student athlete has had a bump, blow or jolt to the head or body, the student may be assessed by an athletic trainer, if available. The athletic trainer can make a first assessment of the student athlete at the time of injury. If the student exhibits any of the danger signs associated with a concussion, the student athlete should receive immediate medical attention.

If during this initial assessment, the student athlete does not exhibit any of the danger signs associated with a concussion, but does exhibit any (even one) of the signs or symptoms of a concussion, a concussion should be suspected. At that time, the student athlete should be removed from play, the athlete's parents should be notified, and the athlete should not return to play until he/she is evaluated by a licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and head injuries, and the "Concussion Evaluation and Release to Play Form for Licensed Health Care Providers" is completed.

2. *Can EMS personnel do an initial assessment for a student athlete that has had a bump, blow or jolt to the head or body?*

No, if EMS personnel are called to the scene, they will document the observed and reported signs and symptoms of the student athlete and provide care following the protocols established by their medical director. If called to the scene, EMS personnel will not determine whether a student athlete may return to play, but will transport a student athlete who is suspected of having a concussion or head injury to the nearest hospital.

3. *Are there important legal considerations for the phrase – "licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and head injuries"?*

Yes, there are three distinct criteria a person must meet in order to qualify under this definition:

- Must have a license given by a governmental agency that regulates a specific profession
- Must be listed in Indiana Code as a health care provider
- Must have training in the evaluation and management of concussions and head injuries

By law, for a person to be able to sign a written clearance in order for the athlete to return to play after a suspected concussion, the person must meet **all** three of the above criteria.

4. *Can an athletic trainer write a written clearance to return to play for a student athlete who is suspected of having a concussion?*

No, an athletic trainer is a licensed health care professional who works under the direction of a licensed health care provider. Because an athletic trainer does not meet the criteria for the definition as a licensed health care provider, they are not allowed to write a written clearance for a student athlete to return to play following a concussion or head injury.

5. *Can emergency medical personnel write a written clearance to return to play for a student athlete who is suspected of having a concussion?*

No, emergency personnel are certified not licensed health care providers. Emergency medical personnel (EMT's and Paramedics) do not meet the criteria for the definition as a licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and head injuries.

List of Forms

- “Heads Up” – Concussion in High School Sports – A Fact Sheet for Parents
- “Heads Up” – Concussion in High School Sports – A Fact Sheet for Athletes
- Concussion Acknowledgment and Signature Form for Parents and Student Athletes
- Concussion Evaluation and Release to Play Form for Licensed Health Care Providers

Additional Resources

- CDC – http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/high_school.html
- CDC – Concussion Signs and Symptoms Checklist - http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/pdf/TBI_schools_checklist_508-a.pdf
- IHSAA PROTOCOL FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS (NFHS) SPORTS PLAYING RULES FOR CONCUSSIONS - <http://www.ihsaa.org/dnn/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=IBxNokFNGyY%3d&tabid=836>
- IHSAA CONTEST OFFICIAL’S REPORT OF REMOVAL OF PARTICIPANT DUE TO POTENTIAL CONCUSSION - <http://www.ihsaa.org/dnn/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=bfxK2un-uWo%3d&tabid=572>
- NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS (NFHS) - <http://nfhslearn.com/electiveDetail.aspx?courseID=15000>