

File: J48

HEAD INJURIES AND CONCUSSION POLICY

In accordance with 105 CMR 201, all school districts and schools are required to have policies and procedures governing the prevention and management of sports-related head injuries within the school district or school. The School Committee, consulting with the Board of Health where appropriate, shall adopt policies and procedures governing the prevention and management of sports-related head injuries within the school district or school following development of a proposal by a team consisting, at a minimum, of a school administrator, school nurse, school physician, and athletic director, in consultation with the district Safe Schools Committee.

Policies and procedures must address sports-related head injuries occurring in extracurricular athletic activities¹ but may be applied to all head injuries sustained by students. Review and revision of such policies and procedures shall occur as needed but at least every two years. At a minimum, these policies shall include:

1. Designation, by the superintendent, principal or school leader, of the Athletic Director and Nursing Supervisor as the people responsible for the implementation of these policies and protocols;
2. Annual training of persons specified in 105 CMR 201.008 in the prevention and recognition of a sports-related head injury, including second impact syndrome, and documentation of each person's completion of such training;
3. Documentation of a student's history of head injury(ies) including concussion(s);
4. Documentation of annual physical examination of students participating in extracurricular athletic activities, consistent with 105 CMR 200.000, and completion of the Department Pre-participation Head Injury/Concussion Reporting Form For Extracurricular Activities (herein after "Department Pre-participation Form");
5. Inclusion of the sports-related head injury policy and information in the student handbook;
6. A requirement that head injuries or suspected concussions sustained in practices or games be reported to the student's parent so the parent may take the student to a medical provider for appropriate medical evaluation and treatment;
7. A requirement that head injuries or suspected concussions be reported to the school nurse;
8. A procedure for post-head injury graduated re-entry accommodation plans to school and academic activities if indicated, including inclusion of the school nurse in the team developing the plans;
9. Instructions to coaches, trainers and volunteers to teach form, techniques, and skills that minimize sports-related head injury. A coach, trainer, or volunteer for an extracurricular athletic activity shall be directed to discourage and prohibit a student athlete from engaging in any unreasonably dangerous athletic technique that endangers the health or safety of a student, including using a helmet or any other sports equipment as a weapon; and
10. Penalties, including but not limited to personnel sanctions, for failure to comply with provisions of the district's policy.

¹ Extracurricular Athletic Activity means an organized school sponsored athletic activity generally occurring outside of school instructional hours under the direction of a coach, athletic director or marching band leader including, but not limited to, Alpine and Nordic skiing and snowboarding, baseball, basketball, cheer leading, cross country track, fencing, field hockey, football, golf, gymnastics, horseback riding, ice hockey, lacrosse, marching band, rifle, rugby, soccer, skating, softball, squash, swimming and diving, tennis, track (indoor and outdoor), ultimate frisbee, volleyball, water polo, and wrestling. All interscholastic athletics are deemed to be extracurricular athletic activities.

Training Program

Before beginning any extracurricular athletic activity the following persons shall complete one of the training programs approved by the Department as found on the Department's website:

1. Coaches;
2. Certified athletic trainers;
3. Volunteers;
4. School physicians;
5. School nurses;
6. Athletic Directors;
7. Directors responsible for a school marching band, whether employed by a school or district or serving in such capacity as a volunteer;
8. Parents of a student who participates in an extracurricular athletic activity; and
9. Students who participate in an extracurricular athletic activity.

The superintendent or designee shall maintain a record of persons trained in accordance with 105 CMR 201.015.

Participation Requirements for Students and Parents

A. Education and Training

1. Each year at the required pre-season meeting for every season, a school shall provide current Department-approved materials to all students who plan to participate in extracurricular athletic activities and their parents in advance of the student's participation. Such materials shall be posted on the district's website and shall at minimum include a summary of the Department's rules relative to safety including but not limited to recognition of symptoms of head injury, the biology and short-term and long-term consequences of a concussion, second impact syndrome and rules for return to play after a head injury or concussion.
2. The student and parent shall submit to the Athletic Director as a pre-requisite to participation in extracurricular athletic activities either (a) a certification of completion for any Department approved on-line course or (b) a signed acknowledgment as to their receipt of Department approved written material required by 105 CMR 201.009(A)(1).
3. The training and education required by 105 CMR 201.009(A)(2) applies to one school year and must be repeated for every subsequent year.

B. Documentation of Head Injury and Concussion History

1. At or before the start of each sport or band season, all students who plan to participate in extracurricular athletic activities shall complete and submit to the Athletic Director a current Department Pre-participation Form, signed by both the student and the parent, that provides comprehensive history with up-to-date information relative to concussion

- history; any head, face or cervical spine injury history; and any history of co-existent concussive injuries.
2. The Athletic Director shall ensure that all forms that are required by 105 CMR 201.009(B)(1) are completed and reviewed, and shall:
 - Provide each coach or band director with copies of forms from all students participating on that coach's team or band director's band;
 - Distribute copies of forms which indicate a history of head injury to the school nurse and school physician.
 3. If a student sustains a head injury or concussion during the season, the Department Report of Head Injury During Sports Season Form (hereinafter "Department Report of Head Injury Form") must be completed (a) by the coach or band director, if the injury or suspected concussion occurs during a game or practice, or (b) by a parent if the injury occurs outside of those settings, and forwarded to the coach or band director. The Athletic Director shall ensure that these forms are reviewed and provided to the persons specified in 105 CMR 201.009(B)(2).

Suspected Concussion Exclusion from Play

1. Any student, who during a practice or competition, sustains a head injury or suspected concussion, or exhibits signs and symptoms of a concussion, shall be removed from the practice or competition immediately and may not return to the practice or competition that day.
2. The student shall not return to play unless and until the student provides medical clearance and authorization as specified in 105 CMR 201.011.
3. The coach, band director, or program supervisor shall communicate the nature of the injury directly to the parent in person or by phone immediately after the game or practice in which a student has been removed from play for a head injury or suspected concussion. The coach, band director, or program supervisor also must provide this information to the parent in writing by the end of the next business day.
4. The coach, the band director or his/her designee shall communicate, by the end of the next business day, with the Athletic Director that the student has been removed from play for a head injury or suspected concussion.
5. Each student who is removed from play and subsequently diagnosed with a concussion shall have a written graduated reentry plan for return to full academic and extracurricular activities.
 - The plan shall be developed by the student's teachers, school nurse, parent, members of the Section 504 or Individualized Education Program team as appropriate and in consultation with the student's physician.
 - The written plan shall include but not be limited to:
 - Physical and cognitive rest as appropriate;
 - Graduated return to classroom studies as appropriate;
 - Estimated time intervals for resumption of activities;
 - Frequent assessments by the school nurse as appropriate; and
 - Periodic medical assessments until full return to classroom activities and extracurricular athletic activities are authorized.
 - The student must be completely symptom free and medically cleared in order to begin graduated reentry to extracurricular athletic activities.

Medical Clearance and Authorization to Return to Play

Each student who is removed from play for a head injury or suspected concussion shall obtain and present to the Athletic Director a Department Post Sports-Related Head Injury Medical Clearance and Authorization Form (herein after “Department Medical Clearance and Authorization Form”) prior to resuming the extracurricular athletic activity. This form must be completed by a physician or one of the individuals as authorized by 105 CMR 201.011(A). The ultimate return to play decision is a medical decision that may involve a multidisciplinary approach, including consultation with parents, the school nurse, and teachers as appropriate.

Only the following individuals may authorize a student to return to play:

- A duly licensed physician;
- A certified athletic trainer in consultation with a licensed physician;
- A duly licensed nurse practitioner in consultation with a licensed physician; or
- A neuropsychologist after the student has been examined and cleared by a licensed physician.

By September 2013, physicians, nurse practitioners and certified athletic trainers providing medical clearance for return to play shall verify that they have received Department-approved training in post-traumatic head injury assessment or, in the case of certified athletic trainers, have received equivalent training as part of their licensure.

Record Maintenance

The school, consistent with any applicable state and federal law, shall maintain the following records for 3 years or at a minimum until the student graduates:

- Verifications of completion of annual training and receipt of materials;
- Department Pre-participation Forms;
- Department Report of Head Injury Forms;
- Department Medical Clearance and Authorization Forms; and
- Graduated re-entry plans for return to full academic and extracurricular activities.

The school shall make these records available to the Department of Public Health and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, upon request or in connection with any inspection or program review.

Reporting

Starting school year 2011-2012, schools shall be responsible for maintaining and reporting annual statistics on a Department form or electronic format that at minimum report:

- The total number of Department Report of Head Injury Forms received by the school;
- The total number of students who incur head injuries and suspected concussions when engaged in any extracurricular athletic activities.

1st Reading: Reg SC Mtg 2/15/2012

2nd Reading: Reg SC Mtg 2/15/2012