

## Students

## Welfare

### **Management of Sports Related Head Concussions – Education, Removal and Return to Play**

The Watertown Unified School District recognizes the importance of student safety while participating in co-curricular activity. As such, the Board of Education, in conjunction with co-curricular staff and administration, has developed a District Policy to guide district concussion education and training, concussion assessment, and return to co-curricular decisions.

#### Definitions

- A. A concussion is a brain injury that is caused by a bump or blow to the head or body. A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury that interferes with normal functioning of the brain. It can also result from a fall or from athletes colliding with each other or with obstacles, such as a goalpost. Concussions can occur during practices or games in any sport or athletic activity, although the potential for concussions is greatest in athletic environments where collisions are common (for example, football, ice hockey, soccer, basketball, wrestling, and softball). All concussions are serious. An athlete does not have to lose consciousness (be knocked-out) to suffer a concussion. If an athlete is allowed to continue to participate in an athletic or physical activity with a concussion, or return to play too quickly following a concussion, he/she will be at risk of further injury or long-term health problems, and even death.
- B. Organized youth athletic activity, means any indoor or outdoor athletic activity organized and held by the District in which the participants, a majority of which are under 19 years of age, are engaged in an athletic game or competition against another team, club or entity, or practice or preparation for an organized athletic game or competition against another team. Organized youth athletic activity does not include any physical activity that is incidental to a nonathletic program. It includes Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletics Association (WIAA) sanctioned, school sponsored sports teams and any other District organized youth athletic activities that fall within this definition.
- C. Health care provider is a person who (1) holds a credential that authorizes the person to provide health care; (2) is trained and has experience in evaluating and managing pediatric concussions and head injuries, and (3) is practicing within the scope of his/her credential.
- D. Student is used to refer to those individuals who are eligible to participate in any District organized youth athletic activity, regardless of whether the individual is also actually enrolled in the District as a student.

#### Education and Training

The Athletic Director shall distribute a concussion and head injury information sheet to the head coach and assistant coaches of each school sports team and to the coach/supervisor of any other organized youth athletic activity. The Athletic Director shall review this information sheet at least annually, in relations to the Department of Public Instruction developed concussion and head injury guidelines and information, to see if there have been any new developments or changes made regarding concussion and head injury management. If changes have been made, the information sheet should be updated accordingly.

It shall be the responsibility of the Athletic Director to distribute the concussion and head injury information sheet to each student who wishes to participate in the sport/organized youth athletic activity once per year. For students participating in WIAA sanctioned, school sponsored sport, this information shall be collected by Athletic Director.

No student may participate in a WIAA sanctioned, school sponsored sport or in any other organized youth athletic activity covered by this rule (including training session or practices) unless he/she returns the concussion and head injury information sheet to the Athletic Director signed by the student and his/her parent or guardian, if the student is under the age of 19. These signed information sheets shall be collected by the Athletic Director.

All middle school and high school coaches of WIAA sanctioned, school sponsored sports teams shall be required to complete the Concussion in Sports – What You Need to Know online training course offered by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFSSA). This WIAA recommended training program provides a guide to understanding, recognizing, and properly managing sports related concussions. It shall be the responsibility of the Athletic Director to ensure coach compliance with this requirement. A copy of the certificate of course completion, including the date upon which the course was completed, shall be kept on file by the Athletic Director. Coaches/supervisors of other organized youth athletic activities are also encouraged to complete this online training course to better familiarize themselves with proper concussion and head injury management protocols.

#### Concussion (Neurocognitive) Testing

- A. Pre-Testing: Student athletes at the high school shall be required to complete neurocognitive testing (ie. imPACT Test) prior to first participating on any of the following school sponsored sports teams: football, soccer, basketball, wrestling, gymnastics (at all levels, freshman, Junior Varsity, Varsity). All remaining WIAA sports at WHS are optional. Parents/guardians can request baseline at any time.

The purpose of this testing is to determine baseline data regarding the student's brain functioning that can be used by the student's health care provider in concussion management in the event the student athlete later suffers a sports related concussion or head injury. The cost of this neurocognitive testing will be paid for by the District.

- B. Post-Concussion Testing: If a student is removed from participation in an organized youth athletic activity or if a student otherwise suffers a concussion or head injury of which an activity's coach or supervisor is aware, the coach may recommend the student take the post-injury neurocognitive test (ie. imPACT Test) before returning to his/her sport. A qualified individual must administer this post-injury test, and a qualified health care provider must provide a written release to return to participation. The cost of the post injury test will be paid for by the District.

#### Removal of Student with Concussion or Head Injury from Athletic Activity Participation

- A. A student athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behavior consistent with a concussion or who is suspected of having a concussion or other head injury shall be removed from the athletic game, competition, or practice by the coach/supervisor of the sports team or other organized

youth athletic activity or by any health care provider who is providing support and medical assistance at the athletic event.

The following are examples of the types of symptoms that a coach or health care provider should consider in the totality of the circumstances as likely evidence of a need to remove a student from participation in an athletic activity under these procedures:

Symptoms Observed by Coaches or Others:

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets sports plays/memory loss
- Asks repetitive questions
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows behavior or personality changes (irritable/mood swings)
- Can't recall events before or prior to hit or fall
- Can't recall events after hit or fall
- Poor memory/concentration

Symptoms Reported by Athlete:

- Headache or pressure in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Ringing in ears
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Does not feel right
- Fatigue

If a health care provider is on site and available, he/she may be asked to help the coach/supervisor make this determination.

If a health care provider is not on site and available to assess the student's symptoms or injury this general assessment will be done by the coach. It is not the responsibility of the coach to determine the severity of the student's possible injury, only to take appropriate and timely actions to safeguard the student who may have suffered an injury. As recommended by the WIAA, when doubt, keep the athlete out of play (sit them out).

In relation to possible concussions and head injuries, officials involved in any youth athletic activity have the same legal duties to initiate the removal of a student from participating in any such activity as do coaches and health care providers.

- B. First aid will be provided to any student who has been removed from any activity under these procedures as appropriate and necessary in accordance with the District's standard emergency care procedures. The student athlete shall not be left alone and must be carefully observed to be sure the symptoms do not worsen.
- C. While all concussions are serious, some injured athletes will require immediate emergency medical care. Unless the student's parent or guardian is present at the activity and immediately assumes full responsibility for the student's care, the coach/supervisor of the activity shall call Emergency Medical Services or 911 if the coach/supervisor or other person assigned to observe the student observes that the student exhibits or reports any of the following symptoms; loss of consciousness, neck pain, blood or watery leakage from the ears, nose or mouth, persistent vomiting, seizures, persistent severe headache, loss of/or slurred speech, excessive drowsiness.
  - 1. The student's parent or guardian shall be consulted if present at the athletic event regarding this decision and the action to be taken regarding emergency treatment.
  - 2. If the student's parent or guardian is not present at the event, the coach/supervisor, or designee shall attempt to contact the student's parent or guardian by phone, using the student's emergency information card on file with the District. If the student's parent or guardian cannot be reached, the coach/supervisor or designee shall attempt to notify the emergency contact person identified on the emergency information card.
- D. Every time a student is removed from an activity under these procedures, it shall be the responsibility of the head coach/supervisor of the sports team or other organized youth athletic activity to maintain regular communication with the student's parent or guardian regarding the student's injury and progress toward recovery. He/she shall also be expected to complete all required documentation and reporting regarding the incident in accordance with established District emergency nursing services procedures, including documenting first aid provided and completing a WUSD Incident Report form.
- E. A major concern with student concussions is that they can interfere with a student's academic and school performance. A student with a concussion may suffer some cognitive problems such as memory loss, unclear thinking, unusual behavior, etc. It is recommended that medical clearance from a health care provider be provided to the school before the student returns to school. In the educational and safety interests of the student, it is recommended that parents and guardians provide relevant information to instructional staff when dealing with the situation in the classroom. If deemed necessary and appropriate based on the student's needs and circumstances, the classroom teacher shall provide reasonable accommodations for the student. Such decisions shall be made on a case-by-case basis. The District encourages the internal sharing of information related to any concussion or head injury among the staff members (ie. Coaches, school nurses, classroom teachers) who have a legitimate educational interest in the information.

## Return to Play:

- A. No student who is removed from an activity under these procedures due to concerns related to a possible concussion or head injury will be allowed to return to play or practice on the same day as the injury occurred.
- B. A student who has been removed from a game, competition or practice due to a concussion or other head injury may not participate in a WIAA sanctioned, school sponsored sport or in any other District organized youth athletic activity until he/she is evaluated by a health care provider and receives written clearance to participate in the activity by the health care provider. This documentation is to be submitted to the coach/supervisor who will forward the documentation to the Athletic Director.
- C. In the event a student suffers a concussion or other head injury, and at the point that the student no longer has any symptoms and has been cleared to return to participate by a health care provider, the head coach will implement a return to play protocol. The head coach will proceed with activities in a step-wise fashion to allow the brain to re-adjust to exertion. Unless other specific instructions are provided by a health care provider who has evaluated the student, the return to play schedule should proceed as outlined below and will be directed by the head coach.

Step 1: Begin light exercise for about 15 minutes, including stationary biking or jogging. No weight lifting.

Step 2: Running in the gym or on the field without equipment.

Step 3: Begin non-contact training drills in full equipment. Weight training can begin.

Step 4: Full contact practice or training.

Step 5: Game play.

Unless otherwise authorized by a health care provider who has evaluated the student, the student shall not undertake more than one of the above steps on any single day.

- D. If symptoms occur at any step in an incremental return-to-play protocol, the student will cease activity and be re-evaluated by a health care provider.

**Legal References:** 2011 Wisconsin Act 172  
Wisconsin Statutes 118.293

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