

# EPIHA GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HEATH & SAFETY IN YOUTH SPORTS ACT “Pennsylvania Concussion Law”

Pennsylvania's new Health & Safety in Youth Sports Act (“PA Concussion Law”) went into effect on July 1, 2012. This law is intended to reduce the risk of traumatic brain injury to student-athletes by creating new responsibilities for all coaches, parents and students competing in interscholastic sports and athletic activities. This law is important to every interscholastic ice hockey program because its definition of “athletic activities” applies not only to traditional PIAA sports, but also to every “athletic contest or competition that is sponsored by or associated with a school entity, including, club sponsored sports and sports activities sponsored by school-affiliated organizations”. The EPIHA feels strongly that this includes our interscholastic ice hockey programs, even those that may not be formally recognized by their high schools. Our compliance with this law is not only important to providing our student-athletes the same high level of concussion protection afforded other high school athletes, but is also a significant step toward gaining the type of formal school recognition that our athletes deserve. Therefore, the EPIHA requires every high school ice hockey coach and administrator to carefully read the summary below and to comply with the Concussion Law this upcoming season.

## SUMMARY OF COACHING REQUIREMENTS:

### On-Line Training & Certification

- (1) Once each school year, every coach shall complete a short on-line concussion management training course offered free-of-charge by the National Federation of High School State Associations (NFSHA); and
- (2) A coach shall not coach any game or practice UNTIL he or she has completed the training course, printed-out the certificate of completion and provided it to his/her school Athletic Director or league president. The link to the NFHSA on-line course is: <http://www.nfhslearn.com/electiveDetail.aspx?courseID=15000> the PIAA link is: <http://www.piaa.org/news/details.aspx?ID=1996>

### Removal From Play Rule

A student-athlete who as determined by a game official, coach from the student's team, certified athletic trainer, licensed physician, physical therapist or other official designated by student's school **exhibits signs or symptoms of a concussion** while participating in any game or practice shall be **removed by the coach from participating at that time.**

### Return to Play Rule

A coach shall **not** return a student-athlete to participation **until** the student is evaluated and cleared to return to participation IN WRITING by a medical professional designated by his school or, if no such designation is available, then by: (1) a Licensed Physician trained in the evaluation and management of concussions; or (2) a licensed or certified health care professional trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and designated by such licensed physician; or (3) a licensed psychologist, neuropsychologically trained in the evaluation of concussions or who has postdoctoral training in neuropsychology and specific training in the evaluation and management of concussions.

## SUMMARY OF PLAYER & PARENT REQUIREMENTS

### Players & Parents Educational Materials & Acknowledgment

Every STUDENT-ATHLETE & his or her PARENT/GUARDIAN must read and RETURN TO THE STUDENT'S SCHOOL (or hockey coach or program director) a signed acknowledgment that he/she read the information prepared by the Pa. Dept of Health or Dept of Education on the risk of concussions and of continuing to play or practice after suffering a concussion. (A sample acknowledgment is attached which must be reviewed and signed by PLAYERS and PARENT/GUARDIAN)

## PENALTIES FOR NON-COMPLIANCE & CIVIL LIABILITY

### Coaches' Non-Compliance

- (1) The EPIHA has adopted the minimum penalties for a coach found to violate the foregoing mandatory provisions of the Concussion Law, which penalties will take effect beginning on July 1, 2014.
  - a. **1<sup>st</sup> Offense:** suspension from coaching any athletic activity for remainder of season.
  - b. **2<sup>nd</sup> Offense:** suspension for remainder of season and next season;
  - c. **3<sup>rd</sup> Offense:** Suspension for life

### Civil Liability

Any coach acting in accordance with the Removal/Return to play rules shall be immune from civil liability.

**Any Questions, Comments or Concerns about the Concussion Law or your team's compliance, please contact Dave Baun** [dbaun@baunlittlaw.com](mailto:dbaun@baunlittlaw.com) (Legal Counsel for the EPIHA and AAHA Associate Coach-In-Chief for High School Hockey) 6/18/12

## UNDERSTANDING OF RISK OF CONCUSSION AND TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

### What is a concussion?

A concussion is a brain injury that:

- Is caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body.
- Can change the way a student's brain normally works.
- Can occur during Practices and/or Contests in any sport.
- Can happen even if a student has not lost consciousness.
- Can be serious even if a student has just been "dinged" or "had their bell rung."

All concussions are serious. A concussion can affect a student's ability to do schoolwork and other activities (such as playing video games, working on a computer, studying, driving, or exercising). Most students with a concussion get better, but it is important to give the concussed student's brain time to heal.

### What are the symptoms of a concussion?

Concussions cannot be seen; however, in a potentially concussed student, **one or more** of the symptoms listed below may become apparent and/or that the student "doesn't feel right" soon after, a few days after, or even weeks after the injury.

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Bothered by light or noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Difficulty paying attention
- Memory problems
- Confusion

### What should students do if they believe that they or someone else may have a concussion?

**Students feeling any of the above symptoms should immediately tell their Coach and their parents.** Also, if they notice any teammate evidencing such symptoms, they should immediately tell their Coach.

**The student should be evaluated.** A licensed physician of medicine or osteopathic medicine (MD or DO), sufficiently familiar with current concussion management, should examine the student, determine whether the student has a concussion, and determine when the student is cleared to return to participate in interscholastic athletics.

**Concussed students should give themselves time to get better.** If a student has sustained a concussion, the student's brain needs time to heal. While a concussed student's brain is still healing, that student is much more likely to have another concussion. Repeat concussions can increase the time it takes for an already concussed student to recover and may cause more damage to that student's brain. Such damage can have long term consequences. It is important that a concussed student rest and not return to play until the student receives permission from an MD or DO, sufficiently familiar with current concussion management, that the student is symptom-free.

**How can students prevent a concussion?** Every sport is different, but there are steps students can take to protect themselves:

Use the proper sports equipment, including personal protective equipment. For equipment to properly protect a student, it must be (1) the right equipment for the sport, position, or activity; (2) worn correctly and the correct size and fit; and (3) used every time the student Practices and/or competes.

Follow the Coach's rules for safety and the rules of the sport.

Practice good sportsmanship at all times.

**If a student believes they may have a concussion:** Don't hide it. Report it. Take time to recover.

I hereby acknowledge that I am familiar with the nature and risk of concussion and traumatic brain injury while participating in interscholastic athletics, including the risks associated with continuing to compete after a concussion or traumatic brain injury.

Student's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

I hereby acknowledge that I am familiar with the nature and risk of concussion and traumatic brain injury while participating in interscholastic athletics, including the risks associated with continuing to compete after a concussion or traumatic brain injury.

Parent's/Guardian's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_