

EPIHA GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SAFETY IN YOUTH SPORTS ACT (Pa Act 101 of 2011) “Pennsylvania Concussion Law”

Pennsylvania’s Safety in Youth Sports Act (“PA Concussion Law”) went into effect on July 1, 2012. It 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 not only applies 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 believes that this includes our interscholastic ice hockey programs using a school name, even if not formally recognized by their high school. 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 formal school recognition that our student-athletes deserve. The EPIHA recommends that every high school ice hockey coach and administrator carefully read the summary below and comply with the Concussion Law this upcoming season. This summary has been updated to include the new recommendations of the 2014 Concussion Summit Task Force for progressive Return to Learn & Return to Play protocol.

SUMMARY OF COACHING REQUIREMENTS:

On-Line Training & Certification for Coaches

- (1) Once each school year, every coach shall complete a short on-line concussion awareness 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 varsity head coach. The link to the NFSHA on-line course is: <https://nfhslearn.com/courses/61064/concussion-in-sports>

Know the Signs & Symptoms of a Concussion;

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury. There are no minor brain injuries. Know the signs & symptoms.

Signs: Athlete appears dazed, stunned, confused, unsteady, forgetful of score, opponent, slow to respond.

Symptoms: athlete may complain of headache, nausea, balance or vision problem, confusion or light sensitivity

CALL 9-1-1: If athlete loses consciousness, is drowsy, has irregular breathing, weakness in extremity or seizure.

Removal from Play Rule – 4-Step Action Plan

A coach who determines that an athlete exhibits any of the signs or symptoms of a concussion shall: (1) **immediately remove the athlete from participation & not leave the athlete alone;** (2) **inform the athlete’s parent or guardian;** (3) **ensure the athlete consults a medical professional;** and (4) **not return the athlete to participation until cleared by a medical professional. WHEN IN DOUBT; SIT HIM OUT.**

Return to Learn & Play Rule - Step-by-Step Return Protocol (Consult your School Policy for Details)

A coach shall **not** return an athlete to participation **until** the athlete is cleared IN WRITING to return to participation by a medical professional or other person trained in the evaluation of concussions as designated by his school and only **AFTER** the athlete has completed: (1) **a normal school day;** (2) **short period (5-10 minutes) of light aerobic exercise;** (3) **a Non-Contact practice;** (4) **a Full Contact Practice.** If symptoms appear at any stage, repeat that step when symptom-free and resume progression. **(Normally about 7 days)**

SUMMARY OF PLAYER & PARENT REQUIREMENTS

Players & Parents Educational Materials & Acknowledgment

Every STUDENT-ATHLETE & his or her PARENT/GUARDIAN must read, sign and RETURN TO THE STUDENT’S SCHOOL (or varsity hockey coach) an acknowledgment that they have read the information prepared by the Pa. Dept of Health or Dept of Education on the risk of concussions and Return to learn/Return to play protocol. (A sample acknowledgment is attached)

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. **1st Offense:** suspension from coaching any athletic activity for remainder of season.
 - b. **2nd Offense:** suspension for remainder of season and next season;
 - c. **3rd 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 (Legal Counsel for the EPIHA and AAHA Associate Coach-In-Chief for High School Hockey) 9.19.17

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

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 ____/____/____