

CONCUSSIONS AND HEAD INJURIES

The Washington School District is committed to ensuring the safety of students while at school and when participating in any school-sponsored events. The Board is aware that head injuries, including concussions, can happen to any student, not just an athlete, and that the risk of catastrophic injuries or death is significant when a concussion or other head injury is not properly evaluated and managed.

Section A of this policy applies to all students of the District who experience or are suspected to have experienced a concussion or other traumatic brain injury, whether in school or out, while Section B pertains to student-athletes, and other students participating in school sports or other district athletic activities.

**A. Provisions relating to all Students Who have Experienced a Concussion or Traumatic Brain Injury.**

1. **Definitions:** For purposes of this policy, the terms below will have the ascribed meanings.

**"Head injury"** means injuries to the scalp, skull, or brain caused by trauma, and shall include a concussion which is the most common type of sports-related brain injury.

**"Health care provider"** means a person who is licensed, certified, or otherwise statutorily authorized by the state to provide medical treatment (physician, advanced registered nurse practitioner, licensed physician's assistant, or dentist).

**"Student-athlete"** means a student involved in any intramural sports program conducted outside the regular teaching day or competitive student sports program between schools in grades 4 through 12.

**"Sports"** means intramural sports programs conducted outside the regular teaching day for students in grades 4 through 12 or competitive athletic programs between schools for students in grades 4 through 12, including, without limitation, all New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association (NHIAA) sanctioned activities, including cheer/dance squads, or any other district-sponsored sports or activities as determined by the board or administration.

2. **Duty to Report.** All District employees shall report any accident or incident which involves a student head injury. The report should be filed in the same manner provided under Board policy EBBB as for that of any accident requiring first aid. Additionally, Teachers should report to the school nurse (or administrator in charge if the nurse is unavailable) if the student appears to have any difficulty with academic tasks that the teacher believes may be related to concussion. The school nurse will notify the student's parents of guardians and treating health care provider.
3. **Return to Learning Protocols.** After a student has suffered a concussion, whether in school or not, before full resumption of academic work, the building principal or his/her designee will work with the school nurse, a student's parent/guardian, medical provider, teacher(s) and other appropriate district staff, to establish a graduated learning reentry plan. The plan will support the student's full return to academic activities, and ease the stress of making up past work while engaged in present work. The plan must include:

- Step-by-step instructions and details for students, parents/guardians and school personnel;
- Time frames for physical and cognitive rest within first few days post-injury and throughout the recovery as needed;
- Guidance on graduated return to extracurricular athletic activities and classroom studies, including classroom accommodations or modifications;
- Frequency of assessments by the school nurse, school physician if applicable, neuropsychologist or athletic trainer until full return to the classroom and extracurricular athletic activities are authorized;
- Any provisions relative to “return-to-play” for student-athletes;
- A plan for communication and coordination among school personnel and with the parents/caregivers and the student’s medical provider.

Section 504 or other such accommodations or modifications when appropriate will be developed in accordance with applicable law and Board policies.

4. **Concussion Awareness and Education.** To the extent possible, the District will implement concussion awareness and education into physical education and/or health education curriculum.

**B. Provisions relating to Students Participating in Sports and Athletic Programs.**

Consistent with the National Federation of High Schools (NFHS) and the NHIAA, the District will utilize recommended guidelines, procedures and other pertinent information to inform and educate coaches, youth athletes, and parents/guardians of the nature and risk of concussions or head injuries, including the dangers associated with continuing to play after a concussion or head injury.

1. **Compliance with NHIAA Procedures and Protocols.** All coaches, officials or licensed athletic trainers will comply with NHIAA recommended procedures for the management of head injuries and concussions.
2. **Immediate Removal from Play and other NHIAA Protocols.** Any coach, official, licensed athletic trainer, or health care provider who suspects that a student-athlete has sustained a concussion or head injury in a practice (including tryouts or trainings) or during a competition shall immediately remove the student-athlete from all physical activity.
3. **“Return to Play”.** A student-athlete who has been removed from play shall not return to play on the same day, nor until (a) a Return to Learning Plan has been established consistent with paragraph A.3 of this policy, (b) he/she is evaluated by a health care provider and receives medical clearance and written authorization from that health care provider stating the student-athlete is symptom free and may return to play, and (c) the student-athlete’s parent/guardian provides written permission for the student-athlete to return to play.

The District shall limit a student-athlete's participation as determined by the student's treating health care provider, unless, based upon the judgement of the coach or licensed athletic trainer greater limitations are appropriate.

If symptoms of a concussion recur, or if concussion signs and/or behaviors are observed at any time during the return-to-activity program, the coach must immediately remove the student-athlete from play. Depending on previous instructions, the athlete may need to be re-evaluated by the health-care provider, or may have to return to the previous step of the return-to-activity program.

4. **Parent Information Sheet.** On a yearly basis, as appropriate, the Athletic Director shall assure that a concussion and head injury information sheet is distributed to each student-athlete and the athlete's parent/guardian prior to the student-athlete's initial practice (including try-out) or competition. This information sheet may be incorporated into the parent permission sheet that allows students to participate in extracurricular athletics.
5. **Coach Training.** All coaches, including volunteer coaches, will complete training in head injury and concussion management as recommended and/or provided by NHIAA, New Hampshire Department of Education and/or other pertinent organizations. The Athletic Director is responsible for assuring compliance with this provision.

**Annual Review of NHIAA Concussion Protocols by Athletic Director.** No less than annually, the Athletic Director or his/her designee shall review any changes that have been made in procedures required for concussion and head injury management or other serious injury by consulting with the NHIAA. The Athletic Director shall take steps to implement the then current procedures and protocols as soon as possible.

**Legal References:**

*RSA 200:49, Head Injury Policies for Student Sports*

*RSA 200:50, Removal of Student-Athlete*

*RSA 205:51, School Districts; Limitation of Liability*

*RSA 200:52, Definitions*

*RSA 200:63, Head Injuries; Return to Learning and Plan*

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