

PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF SPORTS-RELATED HEAD INJURIES

This Circular will remain in effect unless rescinded or superseded by a subsequent version.

BACKGROUND

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head that can affect brain functioning. Concussions can also occur from a blow to the body that causes the head to move rapidly back and forth. Even a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious.

Concussions can occur in *any* sport or recreational activity. Children who return to play while still experiencing symptoms of a concussion are more likely to have another concussion or other lasting effects and symptoms. This circular outlines responsibilities of all who are involved in athletic participation. It includes the following components:

- Pre-participation examination, including a history of previous concussions.
- Protocols for assessing and managing a child who has a concussion on the field.
- Protocols for returning a child who has had a concussion to full participation.
- Academic assessment and accommodation for a child with continued symptoms that interfere with cognitive function and academic progress.

- Prevention of head injuries and health promotion activities that contribute to safe sports participation.

HEADS OF SCHOOL AND PRINCIPALS SHALL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Support and enforce the utilization of appropriate protocols, required documentation, training, and reporting outlined in these procedures.
- Supervising and reviewing that all documentation is in place.
 - All active coaches must complete the annual concussion certification required by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

COACHES, CERTIFIED ATHLETIC TRAINERS, ATHLETIC COORDINATORS, SCHOOL NURSES, AND VOLUNTEERS (EMS, SPORTS PHYSICIANS) SHALL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Completing the annual educational training on identification and management of head trauma.
- Ensuring and documenting that all students/families have submitted:
 - Updated physical examinations consistent with Commonwealth of Massachusetts and Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) sports participation guidelines.
 - Consents for: participation in athletics, emergency on-field care, non-emergent injury or illness evaluation and associated follow up treatment related to athletics, documentation, travel, and medication.

- Completed department pre-participation forms (BPS Sports Medical Questionnaire) before participating in practice or extracurricular athletic activities.
 - Commonwealth of Massachusetts head injury form.
 - An indication that the family has reviewed educational materials about concussion.
- Ensuring that the medical history questionnaire and pre-participation sports physical form(s) are delivered to the school nurse and certified athletic trainer (ATC) in a time frame consistent with the sport. The school nurse and athletic trainer will discuss any student with a concussion history (as indicated by the athlete's primary care physician, pre-participation sports physical, or parent history) with their coach. All athletes must be cleared by the school nurse and athletic trainer in order to play.
- Teaching techniques aimed at minimizing sports-related head injury:
 - Discouraging and prohibiting student athletes 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.
 - Identifying students with head injuries or suspected concussions that occur in play or practice and removing them from play, using either:
 - Coach/volunteer recognition of potential head injury
 - Sideline assessment of concussion evaluation for MDs and ATCs.

- The results of the evaluation or screening tool must be available to the school nurse and parent/guardian, who will forward it to the PCP or other designated physician.
- The coach, athletic trainer, or physician who observed and evaluated the concussion shall complete the DPH Commonwealth of Massachusetts Report of Head Injury During Sports Season form and the Department Report of Head Injury form and transmit it to the athletic director, the parent/guardian, the school nurse, and the athletic trainer.
- Communicating promptly with the parent/guardian of any student removed from play and providing them with documentation to bring to the student athlete's PCP or other designated physician. This documentation must include the DPT Commonwealth of Massachusetts Post Sports-Related Head injury Medical Clearance and Authorization form. This form must be completed by the physician and returned to the school nurse and athletic trainer. This form will be reviewed by the school nurse or athletic trainer and is required before the student athlete is allowed to begin a Return to Play protocol.
- No student can return to play without clearance by the school nurse or athletic trainer in consultation with a physician per 105 CMR 201.
- All student athletes who have sustained a concussive event must complete a graduated Return to Play protocol unless otherwise stipulated by the treating physician, assuring that all documentation is in place by conducting an annual compliance audit. This includes documentation that all students have:

- pre-participation PEs, consent forms, and parent/athlete sign off that concussion information has been reviewed.
- list of all students with concussion
- documentation of follow up for each student with concussion; documentation that athlete is cleared to play.

THE SCHOOL NURSE AND ATHLETIC TRAINER WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Completing the required annual educational training on concussion:
 - School nurses will complete the Concussion Management in Massachusetts Schools course provided by Boston University School Health Institute annually.
- Reviewing any questions raised by the athletic director and/or coaches, reviewing all medical questionnaires and physical exams.
- *Athletic trainer:* Following up with parents/guardians as needed prior to the student's participation in extracurricular athletic activities.
- *School nurse:* Following up with parents/guardians as needed prior to the student's participation in *classroom* activities.
- Maintaining documentation of the medical questionnaire and physical in SNAP (the electronic medical record).
- Maintaining documentation of the head injury assessments in the student's health record in the electronic medical record.

- Ensuring that any student who has experienced a concussion or head injury, during sports activities or otherwise, provides documentation of medical care and proper clearance to return to sports activities using the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Post Concussion Clearance Form.
- Participating in the graduated reentry planning meeting for students who have been diagnosed with a concussion to discuss any necessary accommodations or modifications with respect to academics, course requirements, homework, testing, scheduling, and other aspects of school activities consistent with a graduated reentry plan for return to full academic and extracurricular activities after a head injury and revising the health care plan as needed.
- Presenting appropriate and relevant medical information to the service team, on a need-to-know basis maintaining student privacy.
- Monitoring recuperating students with head injuries and collaborating with teachers and coaches to ensure that the graduated reentry plan for return to full academic and extracurricular activities.
- Providing beginning of school year review of concussions as well as ongoing educational materials on head injury and concussion to teachers, staff, and students.

PARENTS/STUDENTS SHALL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Ensuring that the child has:
 - a. A valid up to date pre-participation physical

- b. A completed sports medical questionnaire
- c. Completed the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Pre-Participation Head Injury and Concussion Reporting Form for Extracurricular Activities
- Reviewing concussion materials, including signed documentation of the review on the athletic permission form.
- Ensuring that the child with a concussion is evaluated by PCP or other appropriate physician even if there has already been emergent transport deemed necessary by EMS or AT evaluation.
- Working with the school nurse, athletic trainer, and the service team to safely implement return to play guidelines.

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