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North Dakota High School Activities Association Concussion Management Procedure

What is a concussion? A concussion is a brain injury. Concussions are caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body. Even or what seems to be a mild bump to the head can be serious.

Due to the increased focus on minimizing the risk for athletes exhibiting signs, symptoms and behaviors of a concussion, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) has placed the following language in all sports rule books beginning in 2010-2011:

“An athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion, or balance problems) shall be immediately removed from the contest and shall not return to play [that day] until cleared by an appropriate health-care professional.” It is highly recommended that every coach, official, student-athlete and parent should successfully complete the 20-minute NFHS online course **“Concussion in Sports—What You Need to Know”**. The course can be accessed at: www.nfhslearn.com.

In response to North Dakota legislation passed in 2011 (Legal Reference: NDCC 15.1-18.2-04), the NDHSAA Board of Directors recommends the following procedures.

NDHSAA registered officials are required to review and know the signs and symptoms of a concussion in administering the new rule change. They are to immediately remove any athlete who displays the following signs or symptoms from the contest. Registered officials will receive concussion training through the on-line rules process:

- Headache,
- Fogginess,
- Difficulty concentrating,
- Easily confused,
- Slowed thought process,
- Difficulty with memory,
- Nausea,
- Lack of energy, tiredness,
- Dizziness, poor balance,
- Blurred vision,
- Sensitivity to light and sounds, &
- Mood changes-irritable, anxious or tearful.

The following is a list of signs and/or symptoms that have been reported by student-athletes suffering from a concussion:

- Headache or 'pressure' in the head,
- Nausea or vomiting,
- Balance problems or dizziness,
- Double or blurry vision,
- Sensitivity to light or noise,
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy,
- Concentration or memory problems,
- Confusion, &
- Just not 'feeling right' or is 'feeling down.'

How can you help your teen prevent a concussion? Every sport is different, but there are steps your teens can take to protect themselves from concussion and other injuries. You can make sure they wear the right protective equipment for their activity. It should fit properly, be well maintained, and be worn consistently and correctly. You can ensure that they follow their coaches' rules for safety and the rules of the sport. You can always encourage them to practice good sportsmanship.

The following is a list of signs that can be observed by a parent and/or guardian from a student athlete with a concussion:

- Appears dazed or stunned,
- Is confused about assignment or position,
- Forgets an instruction,
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent,
- Moves clumsily,
- Answers questions slowly,
- Loses consciousness (even briefly),
- Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes,
- Can't recall events prior to hit or fall, &
- Can't recall events after hit or fall.

What should you do if you think your teen has a concussion? Keep your teen out of play. If your teen has a concussion, his/her brain needs time to heal. Don't let your teen return to play the day of the injury and until a health care professional, experienced in evaluating for concussion, says your teen is symptom-free and it's okay to return to play. A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first – usually within a short period of time (hours, days, or weeks) – can slow recovery or increase the likelihood of having long-term problems. In rare cases, repeat concussions can result in edema (brain swelling), permanent brain damage, and even death. **Seek medical attention right away.** A health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion will be able to decide how serious the concussion is and when it is safe for your teen to return to sports. **Teach your teen that it's not smart to play with a concussion.** Rest is key after a concussion. Sometimes athletes wrongly believe that it shows strength and courage to play injured. Discourage others from pressuring injured athlete to play. Don't let your teen convince you that s/he's "just fine." **Tell all your teen's coaches and the student's school nurse about ANY concussion.** Coaches, school nurses, and other school staff should know if your teen has ever had a concussion. Your teen may need to limit activities while s/he is recovering from a concussion. Things such as studying, driving, working on a computer, playing video games, or exercising may cause concussion symptoms to reappear or get worse. Talk to your health care professional, as well as your teen's coaches, school nurse, and teachers. If needed, they can help adjust your teen's school activities during her/his recovery.

Only an Appropriate Health Care Professional (AHCP) can determine if an athlete has had a concussion. An appropriate health care professional (AHCP) is empowered to determine whether an athlete has received a concussion. An AHCP is defined as a licensed, registered or certified health care provider whose scope of practice includes the recognition of concussion signs and symptoms. If the event continues over multiple days, the designated event AHCP has ultimate authority regarding any return to play decision during the event.

Procedure to follow if an official removes an athlete and the AHCP has determined the athlete does not have a concussion. If it is confirmed by the AHCP that the athlete was removed from competition but did not sustain a concussion, the athlete may practice and compete as per school policy.

Procedure regarding an authorization to return to sport practice/competition: Once a concussion has been diagnosed by an AHCP, only an AHCP can authorize a subsequent return to play. The clearance must be in writing and provided to student or parent who in turn must provide to the school and the clearance may not be on the same date on which the athlete was removed from play. It is recommended that school administration notify the coach when an athlete has permission to return to play.

In the event a Transfer of Care form has not been previously filed with event management, school /NDHSAA designated AHCP medical providers shall not have their decision regarding an athlete's ability to return to competition overruled by any other AHCP. NFHS suggested **Concussion Management Guidelines for Health Care Professionals if the athlete has received a concussion of the day of competition.** No athlete should Return to Play (RTP) or practice on the same day of a concussion. Any athlete suspected of having a concussion should be evaluated by an AHCP that day. Any athlete with a concussion should be medically cleared by an AHCP prior to resuming participation in practice or competition. After medical clearance, RTP should follow a step-wise protocol with provisions for delayed RTP based upon the return of any signs or symptoms.

This form must be signed annually, returned to the school office, and must be available for inspection at the school.