

Management of Concussions and Other Head Injuries

The Board recognizes that concussions and other head injuries are potentially serious and may result in significant brain damage or death if not recognized and managed properly. This policy is intended to promote awareness of this issue as well as the safety of students participating in school-sponsored athletic activities which may pose a risk of concussion or other head injuries. This policy also applies to other school-sponsored activities, which the Superintendent determines, in consultation with school staff, pose a risk of concussion or other head injury (hereafter referred to as “any other covered activities”).

The Superintendent will ensure that all training, protocols and forms implemented in the school unit are consistent with materials promulgated by the Maine Department of Education and Maine Principal’s Association.

Training

All athletic directors, coaches and other school personnel involved in school-sponsored athletics (and any other covered activities) will receive training in the identification and management of concussions and other head injuries prior to assuming their coaching responsibilities. All identified personnel will receive refresher training every two years, or whenever the Maine Department of Education and Maine Principal’s Association recommendations, protocols or forms are revised.

Student and Parent Information

Annually, prior to the beginning of each sports season, students who will be participating in school-sponsored athletic activities and their parents/guardians will be provided information regarding:

- A. The risk of concussion and other head injuries and the dangers associated with continuing to participate when a concussion or other head injury is suspected;
- B. The signs and symptoms of concussion and other head injuries; and
- C. RSU 40’s protocols for 1) removal from the activity when a student is suspected of having sustained a concussion or other head injury, 2) evaluation, and 3) return to participation in the activity (“Zurich Progression Graduated Return to Play Protocol”).

The student and their parent(s) must sign a statement acknowledging that they have received and read this information before the student will be allowed to participate in any school-sponsored athletic activity.

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It is the responsibility of the athletic director, athletic trainer and all coaches of the activity to act in accordance with this policy when they recognize that a student may be exhibiting signs, symptoms and behaviors associated with a concussion or other head injury.

Any student suspected of having sustained a concussion or other head injury during a school-sponsored athletic activity including but not limited to competition, practice or scrimmage, must be removed from the activity immediately. The student and their parent(s) will be informed of the need for an evaluation for brain injury before the student will be allowed to return to the activity.

No student will be permitted to return to the activity or to participate in any other school-sponsored athletic activity on the day of the suspected concussion.

Any student who is suspected of having sustained a concussion or other head injury will be prohibited from further participation in school-sponsored athletic activities until they have been evaluated and received written medical clearance to do so from a licensed health care provider, completed this policy's Return to Play Protocol, and is granted final approval by the athletic director.

Cognitive Considerations

School personnel will be alert to cognitive and academic issues that may be experienced by students who have suffered a concussion or other head injury, including, but not limited to, difficulty with concentration, organization, long-and-short term memory and sensitivity to bright lights and sounds, and accommodate a gradual return to full participation in academic activities as appropriate, based on the recommendations of the student's licensed health care provider and appropriate designated school personnel.

If a parent/guardian or school staff member suspects that a student's concussion or other head injury may substantially limit a major life activity, the student will be referred for consideration as a person with a disability who may require a 504 Plan. If the student is identified as having a disability as a result of a concussion or head injury, the student's 504 team will address issues regarding participating and accommodations in school programs and activities as a result of that disability. If a parent/guardian or school staff member believes that the student may need special education as a result of a concussion or other head injury, then the student will be referred to special education.

Graduated return to athletic plans will begin only after a student has returned to full participation in academics and is completely symptom free at rest.

Return to play schedule for the student will proceed as follows and will be monitored by

the athletic director and athletic trainer, in coordination with the school nurse. There will be an interval of 24 hours between each step.

Graduated Return to Play Protocol

Step 1: Light aerobic exercise: Intensity below 70%; no resistance training.

Step 2: Sport-specific exercise: Running, skating drills; no head impact drills.

Step 3: Non-contact training drills: Progression to more complex training drills; may start resistance training.

Step 4: Full-contact practice: Following a licensed health care provider's clearance; participate in normal training.

Step 5: Return to play: Normal game play.

If at any time post-concussion symptoms occur during the graduated return, there will be at minimum, a 24 hour rest period. Once asymptomatic following the rest period, the athlete will drop back to the previous level and the progression will continue.

Concussion Management Team

The Superintendent will appoint a concussion management team including a school administrator to be responsible, under the administrative supervision of the Superintendent, to make recommendations related to implementation of this policy. The concussion management team will include the athletic director and school nurse and may include one or more principals or assistant principals, the school physician and such other school personnel or consultants as the Superintendent deems appropriate.

Legal Reference: 20-A M.R.S. §1001(19)

This is a required policy.

Adopted: November 1, 2012

Revised: June 6, 2019
August 6, 2020