

Students

Student Athlete Concussions and Head Injuries ¹

The Superintendent or designee shall develop and implement a program to manage concussions and head injuries suffered by student athletes. ² The program shall:

1. Comply with the concussion protocols, policies, and by-laws of the Illinois High School Association, including its *Protocol for NFHS Concussion Playing Rules* and its *Return to Play Policy*. ³ These specifically require that:
 - a. A student athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion in a practice or game shall be removed from participation or competition at that time.
 - b. A student athlete who has been removed from an interscholastic contest for a possible concussion or head injury may not return to that contest unless cleared to do so by a physician licensed to practice medicine in all its branches in Illinois or a certified athletic trainer.
 - c. If not cleared to return to that contest, a student athlete may not return to play or practice until the student athlete has provided his or her school with written clearance from a physician licensed to practice medicine in all its branches in Illinois or a certified athletic trainer working in conjunction with a physician licensed to practice medicine in all its branches in Illinois.
2. Inform student athletes and their parents/guardians about this policy in the *Agreement to Participate* or other written instrument that a student athlete and his or her parent/guardian must sign before the student is allowed to participate in a practice or interscholastic competition. ⁴

The footnotes are not intended to be part of the adopted policy; they should be removed before the policy is adopted.

¹ Each school board must adopt a policy regarding student athlete concussions and head injuries that is in compliance with the protocols, policies, and by-laws of the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) (105 ILCS 5/10-20.53, added by P.A. 97-204). This requirement applies to elementary school districts even if they have no student athletes.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention explains that a concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head that alters the way the brain normally functions. See www.cdc.gov/concussion/. The CDC website contains excellent resources for the recognition, response, and prevention of concussions, including the opportunity to order or download free educational materials on concussions that can be distributed to parents, students, and coaches.

² The IHSA's by-laws define a *student-athlete* as "[a] student who has participated in one or more practices and/or athletic contests in any sport offered by or under the auspices of a high school." See

www.ihsa.org/AbouttheIHSA/ConstitutionBylawsPolicies.aspx.

A school board for a high school or unit district may want to add the definition as follows: "A *student athlete* is a student who has participated in one or more practices and/or athletic contests in any sport offered by or under the auspices of a high school."

A sample program is provided in 7:305-AP, *Administrative Procedure - Program for Managing Student Athlete Concussions and Head Injuries*.

³ The *Protocol for NFHS Concussion Playing Rules* contains concussion information and provides instructions when a student athlete sustains an apparent concussion. The *Return to Play Policy* addresses the requirements for returning a student athlete to play after he or she exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors of a concussion. Available at:

www.ihsa.org/Resources/SportsMedicine/ConcussionManagement/SchoolResources.aspx.

⁴ School districts must include information about concussions in the student athlete agreement, contract, code, or written instrument that a student athlete and his or her parent/guardian are required to sign before participating in a practice or interscholastic competition. IHSA drafted a sample *Concussion Information Sheet*, also known as *Sign off (DOC)*. It has been incorporated into 7:300-E1, *Agreement to Participate*. It can be used to inform student athletes and parents, and it is available at: www.ihsa.org/Resources/SportsMedicine/ConcussionManagement/ParentGuardianResources.aspx.

3. Provide coaches and student athletes and their parents/guardians with educational materials from the Illinois High School Association regarding the nature and risk of concussions and head injuries, including the risks inherent in continuing to play after a concussion or head injury. ⁵
4. Include a requirement for staff members to notify the parent/guardian of a student who exhibits symptoms consistent with that of a concussion. ⁶

LEGAL REF.: 105 ILCS 5/10-20.53.

CROSS REF.: 4:170 (Safety), 7:300 (Extracurricular Athletics)

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⁵ IHSA has produced educational materials on concussions for coaches, parents/guardians, student athletes, and the school and health care providers on concussions that are available at:

www.ihsa.org/Resources/SportsMedicine/ConcussionManagement.aspx.

⁶ This provision is optional.