

USTA TN Youth Sports Concussion & Head Injury Policy

In 2013, the Tennessee General Assembly enacted Public Chapter 148. This act, effective January 1, 2014, requires that all youth athletic activities establish guidelines to inform and educate coaches, youth athletes, parents/guardians, and other adults involved in youth athletics about the nature, risk, and symptoms of concussion and head injury. Every individual involved in youth athletics must become more proactive in identifying and treating athletes who show signs of concussion or head injury.

More information from the Tennessee Department of Health regarding this state law may be found at <http://health.tn.gov/TBI/concussion.htm>. Information available at this link includes, but is not limited to, Senate Bill 882 signed by Governor Haslam, links to additional materials, Information Form for Parents/Guardians, and Information Form for Coaches. In order to address this critical issue, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) includes the following language in every sport rule book publication:

Any player 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 game and shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health care professional.

Education is the key to identifying and treating youth athletes who show signs of a concussion during athletic participation. It is very important that every administrator, coach, parent/guardian, officials, athlete, and health care administrator know the symptoms and steps to take when dealing with youth athletes that display signs of a possible concussion or head injury.

Concussion can be a serious health issue and should be treated as such.

USTA TN JTT programs shall require the following:

- 1) **Coaches** – Prior to the first practice or competition, all coaches (head & assistant, volunteer or paid) must review and sign a concussion and head injury information sheet.
- 2) **Parents/Guardians & Youth Athletes** – Prior to the first practice or competition, all youth athletes and the athlete's parent/guardian shall review a concussion and head injury information sheet. A form confirming this review shall be signed and returned by the youth athlete's parent/guardian to the Local League Coordinator.
- 3) **"When in doubt, sit them out"** – Any youth athlete who shows signs, symptoms, and behavior consistent with a concussion shall immediately be removed from the activity or competition for evaluation by the coach, a licensed health care professional if available, or other designated person.
- 4) No youth athlete who has been removed from play due to suspected concussion shall return to practice or competition until the youth athlete is evaluated by a health care provider and receives written clearance from the health care provider for a full or graduated return to play. (Health care provider shall be a certified athletic trainer, licensed nurse practitioner, physician's assistant, medical doctor, or osteopathic physician)
- 5) All documentation (including Coach Signature Forms, Player and Parent/Guardian Signature Forms) shall be returned to Local League Coordinators.