



## Concussion Policy

*Information for Players, Parents and Coaches*

Note: The Old Colony Youth Football League has partnered with the CDC and the NFL's Heads Up football program. We are following their guidelines and recommendations as our league wide concussion policy which each town in the Old Colony Youth Football League is required to follow.

# What Do We Know?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury that can have a serious effect on a young, developing brain.<sup>1,2</sup> While most children and teens with a concussion recover quickly and fully, some will have concussion symptoms that last for days, weeks, or even months. Not giving the brain enough time to heal after a concussion can be dangerous. A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain heals from the first, usually within a short amount of time (hours, days, weeks), can slow recovery or increase the chances for long-term health problems. These may include changes in how the child or teen thinks, feels, and acts, as well as their ability to learn and remember. While rare, a repeat concussion can result in brain swelling or permanent brain damage. It can even be fatal.<sup>6-10</sup>

## The Facts

- Athletes who have had a concussion, at any point in their lives, have a greater chance of getting another concussion.
- Recognizing and responding properly to concussions when they first occur can help prevent further injury or even death.<sup>6-10</sup>
- Young children and teens are more likely to get a concussion and can take longer to recover than adults.<sup>3-5</sup>
- A concussion is a brain injury and all are serious.
- Most concussions occur without loss of consciousness.
- Recognition and proper response to concussions when they first occur can help prevent further injury or even death.

# What Can We Do?

A concussion can happen at home, school, or play. So everyone from players, parents and coaches, to sports leagues officials and school professionals, can play an important role in learning how to spot a concussion, and knowing what to do if they think a child or teen has a concussion.

## **Policy Efforts:**

Recently many states, schools, and sports leagues and organizations have created policies or action plans on concussion in many youth sports and high school sports. While these policy efforts show some promise, more research is needed to learn if these strategies can help educate coaches and parents about this issue and help protect children and teens from concussion and other serious brain injuries.<sup>12,13</sup>

## **State Laws:**

Beginning in 2009, the state of Washington passed the first concussion in sports law, called the Zackery Lystedt Law.<sup>14</sup> One month later, Max's law<sup>15</sup> passed in Oregon. In total, between 2009 and 2012, 43 states, and [CU1] the District of Columbia, passed laws on concussion in sports for youth and/or high school athletes, often called Return to Play Laws. Some organizations, such as the National Conference of State Legislatures, have created online maps to track and update concussion in sports laws by state.

Check out a CDC report that includes lessons learned from Washington and Massachusetts on implementing their states' concussion in sports laws. Learn more at: [www.cdc.gov/concussion/policies.html](http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/policies.html).

## **OCYFL Policy:**

Our league concussion policy includes additional strategies that will need to be implemented but many are already built into our organization. Research is needed to learn if any additional strategies will be needed that can help protect children and teens from concussion and other serious brain injuries. Below is a list of strategies in policy and action plans that towns will need to follow as a member of OCLYF. This list is based on interviews by CDC with nine states other states that follow this policy with great success and Massachusetts is one of the states that was interviewed.

The Old Colony Youth Football Leagues concussion policy is outlined below with a recommended return to play policy.

- **3 Step Action Plan**
- **Be Ready for an Emergency**
- **Ensure Safer Play**
- **Concussion Training for Coaches**
- **Parent and Athlete Information Sheet**
- **Build the Science**
- **Focus on Education**
- **Manage Return to Play**

### **3 Step Action Plan:**

1. **Educate Coaches, Parents, and Athletes:** We inform and educate our coaches, athletes, and their parents and guardians about concussion through our training programs provided by online through the CDC and/or a concussion information sheet.
2. **Remove Athlete from Play:** An athlete who is believed to have a concussion is to be removed from play right away.
3. **Obtain Permission to Return to Play:** An athlete can only return to play or practice after at least 24 hours and with permission from a health care professional.

These action steps are based on recommendations presented in the International Concussion Consensus Statement.<sup>17</sup> First created in 2002 and most recently updated in 2008, the Consensus Statement was developed by experts in the field and includes the latest science available on concussion in sports.

### **Be Ready for an Emergency:**

- Our concussion emergency medical action plan during game days is to have an EMT onsite at every game, games cannot be played unless there is an EMT or Certified Medical Professional who meets the bylaw guidelines.
- All towns must also have an emergency plan for practice times during the week as well which is designed and implemented at each towns discretion.
- All EMT's must have a list of Trauma Medical Centers with them during games and work with the ambulance to determine the closest facility.

### **Ensure Safer Play:**

- Limiting contact during sports practices (when appropriate).
- Each town board should be evaluating how practices and drills are conducted and at the same time putting in place techniques to help reduce the chances of injury. This is each town's responsibility to make sure they are complying with this policy.
- Checking sports equipment often. This includes making sure the equipment fits the athletes well, is in good condition, stored properly, and is repaired and replaced based on instructions from the equipment companies.

## **Concussion Training for Coaches:**

*Heads Up: Concussion in Youth Sports* is a free, online course available to coaches, parents, and others helping to keep athletes safe from concussion. It features interviews with leading experts, dynamic graphics and interactive exercises, and compelling storytelling to help you recognize a concussion and know how to respond if you think that your athlete might have a concussion.

Towns may choose to use a different concussion certification program, for example; “USA Football” or “NFHS”, any program is acceptable as long as every coach in the league has been certified and passed a concussion course and quiz/test.

Link for taking free online training course for coaches and parents.

[http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/online\\_training.html](http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/online_training.html)

This course will help you:

- Understand a concussion and the potential consequences of this injury.
- Recognize concussion signs and symptoms and how to respond.
- Learn about steps for returning to activity (play and school) after a concussion.
- Focus on prevention and preparedness to help keep athletes safe season-to-season.

Once a coach has completed the training and passed the quiz, he or she can print out their certification and provide it to your local town officials. Each coach in the OCYFL league must pass the test before they can coach at the start of the season. Each town must provide the league with a notarized letter stating all of their coaches have taken and passed the quiz. This letter is due at the August League Meeting and prior to weigh in day. The information can be supplied on the same CORI Notarized letter or on a separate letter that has been notarized.

## **Parent and Athlete Information Sheet:**

Towns are required to distribute this form or an equivalent form to each parent and player and have them read it and sign it then return or send to your coach, league rep or official of their perspective town. It is not a requirement to file these forms with the league, its each individual towns responsibility manage these informational sheets and training of player and parents on concussions. We highly recommend that the players and parents watch the video on concussions hosted on the CDC website or equivalent websites.

[http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/online\\_training.html](http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/online_training.html)

### **Build the Science:**

- Collecting data on the number of concussions reported by athletes during the season not mandatory but recommended.
- Studying changes in concussion knowledge and awareness among coaches and parents before and after the policy is put in place not mandatory but recommended.

### **Focus on Education:**

- Posting information for parents, coaches, and athletes at the field or sidelines. Posted information often includes concussion signs and symptoms, as well as what to do if a concussion occurs.
- Hosting or requiring regular trainings for athletes, parents, coaches, and school and health care professionals about concussion.

### **Manage Return to Play:**

If you suspect that an athlete has a concussion, implement your 4-step action plan:

1. **Remove the athlete from play.** Look for signs and symptoms of a concussion if your athlete has experienced a bump or blow to the head or body. When in doubt, keep the athlete out of play.
2. **Ensure that the athlete is evaluated by a health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion.** Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Health care professionals have a number of methods that they can use to assess the severity of concussions. As a coach, recording the following information can help health care professionals in assessing the athlete after the injury:
  - Cause of the injury and force of the hit or blow to the head or body
  - Any loss of consciousness (passed out/knocked out) and if so, for how long
  - Any memory loss immediately following the injury
  - Any seizures immediately following the injury
  - Number of previous concussions (*if any*)
3. **Inform the athlete's parents or guardians about the possible concussion and give them the fact sheet on concussion.** Make sure they know that the athlete should be seen by a health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion.
4. **Keep the athlete out of play the day of the injury and until a health care professional, experienced in evaluating for concussion, says they are symptom-free and it's OK to return to play and player must receive written**

**authorization from health care professional and deliver that to the head coach before returning 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.

# References:

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## Additional Resources:

For more information and resources on concussion and CDC's Heads Up program, visit [www.cdc.gov/Concussion](http://www.cdc.gov/Concussion) or contact CDC at [cdcinfo@cdc.gov](mailto:cdcinfo@cdc.gov) or 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4643) TTY 1-888-232-6348.