

## **CONCUSSION AND HEAD INJURY**

*Policy Code:* **4270/6145**

The board recognizes that concussions and other head injuries may be serious and potentially life threatening and that such injuries may result in serious consequences later in life if managed improperly. The board is committed to practices that reduce the potential for short-term or long-term effects from such injuries. In support of this commitment, the board directs school employees to comply with the concussion safety requirements for interscholastic athletic competition established by G.S. 115C-12(23) as amended in the Gfeller-Waller Concussion Awareness Act of 2011, and to implement and follow all concussion safety requirements set forth in State Board of Education rules and policies for middle and high schools.<sup>1</sup> The superintendent or designee shall develop a plan consistent with state requirements and shall implement and monitor compliance with this policy. The superintendent is authorized to investigate the use of baseline testing for student-athletes and require that student-athletes undergo such testing prior to their participation in any interscholastic athletic competition.<sup>2</sup>

### **A. DEFINITION OF CONCUSSION<sup>3</sup>**

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury caused by a direct or indirect impact to the head that results in disruption of normal brain function, which may or may not result in a loss of consciousness.

### **B. SCHOOL HEAD INJURY INFORMATION SHEET<sup>4</sup>**

Each year, all coaches, school nurses, athletic directors, first responders, volunteers, student-athletes, and parents of student-athletes must be provided with a concussion and head injury information sheet that meets the requirements of the State Board.<sup>5</sup> Before

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<sup>1</sup> G.S. 115C-12(23), as amended in 2011, requires the State Board of Education to adopt specified rules relating to concussions and other head injuries in interscholastic sports in middle and high schools. The rules subsequently adopted by the State Board mirror the legislative requirements established by the General Assembly except with respect to additional requirements for the mandatory information sheet described in Section B of this policy. The new rules apply beginning with the 2011-2012 school year.

<sup>2</sup> This sentence is optional. The Athletic Safety Task Force of the North Carolina High School Athletic Association recommended in its 2008 best practices report that member schools implement mandatory baseline testing for concussions to protect the safety of student-athletes. The report recommends baseline testing for participants in football, soccer, lacrosse, and wrestling, at a minimum.

<sup>3</sup> This definition can be found in G.S. 115C-12(23)a.

<sup>4</sup> The requirements in this section are mandated by the State Board of Education and G.S. 115C-12(23)a. An information sheet compliant with law and State Board rules, as well as other resources designed to help schools comply with the law, are available on the UNC Matthew Gfeller Sport-Related TBI Research Center web site, <http://gfellerwallerlaw.unc.edu/GfellerWallerLaw/gwlaw.html>.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (the "NCAA") and the CDC also offer extensive educational resources on concussion and head injury at their respective websites, [www.NCAA.org/health-safety](http://www.NCAA.org/health-safety) and [www.CDC.gov/Concussion](http://www.CDC.gov/Concussion).

<sup>5</sup> Per the State Board's rules, the information sheet must include: (1) the definitions and symptoms of concussions and head injuries; (2) a description of the physiology and the potential short-term and long-term effects of

any student, school employee, volunteer, or first responder will be allowed to participate in interscholastic athletic activities, including tryouts, practices, or competitions, he or she must sign the head injury information sheet and return it to the coach. Parents also must sign the sheet and return it to the coach before their children may participate in any interscholastic athletic activity. The principal of each school shall ensure that a complete and accurate record of the returned signed sheets is maintained in accordance with law and State Board policy.<sup>6</sup>

### **C. REMOVAL FROM AND RETURN TO PLAY**

Any student-athlete who is exhibiting signs or symptoms consistent with a concussion must be removed from athletic activity immediately. Further, the student-athlete must not be allowed to return to play or practice that day or on any subsequent day until he or she has been evaluated and has received written clearance for participation that complies with the requirements of G.S. 115C-12(23) and any other applicable law or State Board policy.<sup>7</sup>

### **D. EMERGENCY ACTION PLANS<sup>8</sup>**

Each principal or designee shall develop a venue-specific emergency action plan to respond to serious medical injuries and acute medical conditions in which the condition of the injured student may deteriorate rapidly. All such plans must include a delineation of roles, methods of communication, available emergency equipment, and a plan for emergency transport. The plans must be (1) in writing, (2) reviewed by an athletic trainer who is licensed in North Carolina, (3) approved by the principal if developed by a designee, (4) distributed, posted, reviewed, and rehearsed in accordance with G.S. 115C-12(23),<sup>9</sup> and (5) compliant with any other requirements of state law and State Board policy.

### **E. RECORD KEEPING**

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concussions and other head injuries; (3) the medical return-to-play protocol for post-concussion participation in interscholastic athletic activities; and (4) any other information deemed necessary by the local board of education. While not specified by the State Board, other information required by the local board could include, e.g., techniques to prevent concussion and head injury and/or resources for obtaining more information on concussion and head injury.

<sup>6</sup> These signed sheets must be maintained as part of the record keeping requirements described in Section E, below. See 115C-12(23)d.

<sup>7</sup> G.S. 115C-12(23)b lists the types of licensed professionals who may authorize student-athletes' return to play. A clearance form ("Gfeller-Waller Concussion Clearance Form") is included in the resource packet available at [http://gfellerwallerlaw.unc.edu/GfellerWallerLaw/gwlaw\\_files/GfellerWallerResourcePacket.pdf](http://gfellerwallerlaw.unc.edu/GfellerWallerLaw/gwlaw_files/GfellerWallerResourcePacket.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> The requirements in this section are mandated by G.S. 115C-12(23)c.

<sup>9</sup> G.S. 115C-12(23)c requires all licensed athletic trainers, first responders, coaches, school nurses, athletic directors, and volunteers for interscholastic athletic activities to review and rehearse the emergency action plan annually. School officials can find resources for developing the emergency action plan at the UNC website noted in footnote 4.

The superintendent shall require each principal to maintain complete and accurate records of actions taken in his or her school to comply with this policy and applicable legal authority.<sup>10</sup> Records shall include accounts of any education or training as may be required by law or State Board of Education policy.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>12</sup>The superintendent's annual report to the board on compliance with laws and policies related to student wellness shall include a report on the system's compliance with laws and policies related to concussions and head injuries. (See Section G of policy 6140, Student Wellness.)

Legal References: G.S. 115C-12(23); S.L. 2011-147

Cross References: Student Wellness (policy 6140)

Other Resources: Matthew Gfeller Sport-Related TBI Research Center at UNC website [http://tbicenter.unc.edu/MAG\\_Center/Home.html](http://tbicenter.unc.edu/MAG_Center/Home.html); *Report to the North Carolina General Assembly: Study of Sports Injuries at Middle School and High School Levels*, N.C. Department of Public Instruction (2011), available at <http://www.ncleg.net/documentsites/committees/JLEOC/Reports%20Received/2011%20Reports%20Received/Study%20of%20Sports%20Injuries%20at%20Middle%20and%20High%20School%20Levels.pdf>

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<sup>10</sup> These records are required by G.S. 115C-12(23)d.

<sup>11</sup> Section 2.(a) of S.L. 2011-147 directs the Matthew Gfeller Sport-Related Research Center at UNC, in conjunction with the NCHSAA, NCDPI and other specified associations, to develop an athletic concussion safety training program to be used by coaches, school nurses, athletic directors, volunteers, students, and parents involved in interscholastic athletic activities in public schools. The Center's educational program requirements and other recommendations can be viewed at <http://www.gfellerwallerlaw.unc.edu/GfellerWallerLaw/education.html>.

<sup>12</sup> This paragraph is optional.