

POLICY TO ADDRESS SUSPECTED SPORTS RELATED HEAD INJURY/CONCUSSION

The Easton Public Schools has adopted this policy to address the identification and proper handling of suspected head injury for students in grades 6-12 who are participating in school-sponsored extracurricular athletic activities in accordance with Mass. Gen. L. c. 111, Section 222 and accompanying regulations (105 CMR 201. et seq.) (“Regulations”). Affirmation of an Interim Policy was provided to the Department of Public Health on school letterhead in January 2012, with affirmation of the Final Policy to be provided by March 1, 2012. Review and affirmation of the Policy will again be provided no later than September 30, 2013, and bi-annually thereafter.

I. Definitions

The definitions of terms used in this policy are those set forth in the Regulations at 105 CMR 201.005. The following are selected for reprinting here:

Coach means an employee or volunteer responsible for organizing and supervising student athletes to teach them the fundamental skills of Extracurricular Athletic Activities. The term coach includes both head coaches and assistant coaches (and per the definition of Extracurricular Athletic Activity below, marching band directors).

Concussion means a complex disturbance in the brain function due to direct or indirect trauma to the head, related to neurometabolic dysfunction, rather than structural injury.

Extracurricular Athletic Activity means an organized school sponsored athletic activity generally occurring outside of school instructional hours under the director of coach, athletic director or band leader. (Among the examples listed in the definition are cheer leading and marching band. Thus, any reference to Extracurricular Athletic Activities in this policy includes the Oliver Ames High School Marching Band)

Head Injury means a direct or indirect trauma to the head including a concussion or traumatic brain injury.

Second impact syndrome means a potentially lethal condition that can occur when a person sustains a head injury prior to the complete healing of a previous brain injury causing deregulation of cerebral blood flow with subsequent vascular engorgement.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) means a complex pathophysiological process affecting the brain, induced by traumatic biomechanical forces. TBI may be caused either by a direct blow to the head, face, neck or elsewhere on the body with an impulsive force transmitted to the head. TBI includes, but is not limited to, a concussion.

II. Roles and Responsibilities

Athletic Director

The Athletic Director shall be responsible for the general implementation of this policy and any accompanying procedures. These responsibilities include:

1. Supporting and enforcing protocols, documentation, training and reporting requirements.
2. Supervising, reviewing and properly distributing all documentation received.
3. Reviewing the policy every two years and recommending changes and/or updates to the school committee for adoption.
4. Reviewing and recommending updated training programs and student/ parent handbooks at least once every two years.
5. Coordinating outreach to parents who have not provided required pre-participation forms and documentation.

School Nurse and other School Based Staff

As reflected throughout this policy, various members of the school staff play an important role in implementation of this policy. The School Nurse's role is particularly important, involving responsibilities for:

1. Reviewing or having the school physician review completed Pre-Participation Forms indicating a history of head injury that have been forwarded to her by the AD.
2. Communicating with athletic trainers regarding a student's history of head injury.
3. Following up with parents and students as needed prior to the student's participation in Extracurricular Athletic Activities.
4. Reviewing Department Report of Head Injury During Sports Season Form which a coach or trainer submits as a result of a head injury that has occurred during an extracurricular athletic activity or that a parent submits as a result of head injury that has occurred outside of an extracurricular athletic activity but that takes place during the extracurricular activity season, with follow-up reporting requirements outlined herein.

Athletic Trainer

The Athletic Trainer also has specific responsibilities, including but not limited to:

1. Reviewing all *Pre-Participation Head Injury/Concussion Reporting for Extracurricular Activities Forms ("Pre-Participation Forms")* and forwarding to the athletic director and school nurse those forms that indicate a history of head injury and to identify students who are at greater risk for repeated head injuries.
2. Identify students with head injuries or suspected conditions that occur in practice or competition and removing them from play.

Coaches

As reflected in this policy, coaches also have a key role in its implementation. In addition to their other responsibilities listed herein, all coaches are required to:

1. Instruct students in form, technique and skills that minimize athletic-related head injury and are required to discourage and prohibit students from engaging in any unreasonably dangerous athletic technique that endangers the health and safety of a student, including using a helmet or any other equipment as a weapon.
2. Identify athletes with head injuries or suspected concussions that occur in practice or competition and remove them from play.

Students

In addition to their other responsibilities listed herein, all students are required to:

1. Adhere to skills and instructions designed to minimize athletic related injuries. Students who engage in unreasonably dangerous behavior while participating in Extracurricular Athletic Activities may be excluded from the privilege of further participation and, further, may be subject to disciplinary consequences in accordance with the code of conduct.

III. Training

The following personnel, both those employed and those serving in a volunteer capacity, shall be required to participate in an annual training approved by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) in the prevention and recognition of a sports-related head injury, including second impact syndrome: coaches (as noted above, this term includes marching band directors), certified athletic trainers, school physicians, school nurses, Athletic Director and game officials. In addition, students who wish to participate in an Extracurricular Athletic Activity and their parents shall be required to participate in such training annually.

Annual Concussion Training:

Required Concussion Training for school staff, parents/guardians and student athletes must be approved by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH). Training courses are online, available free of charge, and last only about 30 minutes. The courses approved by the Mass DPH are listed at the following link:

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/com-health/injury/sports-concussion-training-materials.pdf>

Mass DPH approved concussion training materials are also available at the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association website

http://www.miaa.net/contentm/easy_pages/view.php?sid=38&page_id=98

or at the Oliver Ames High School website: <http://www.oliverames.org/sports/>

Hard copies are available in the Oliver Ames High School Athletic Handbook.

Individuals who are required to participate in the training must submit documentation verifying their completion of the training on an annual basis to the Athletic Director.

IV. Prerequisites Related to Head Injuries for Student Participation in an Extracurricular Athletic Activity

Prior to a student beginning (or continuing) participation in any Extracurricular Athletic Activity, whether involving tryouts, practices, contests, or performances, the following must take place;

1. Parents and students must submit to the Athletic Director a certification that they have completed the training requirements described in Section III above. Once submitted, the certification is valid for one school year. This certification may be completed online.
2. Prior to a student's participation in an Extracurricular Athletic Activity, the parent and student must provide to the Athletic Director a completed form for *Pre-Participation Head Injury/ Concussion Reporting For Extracurricular Activities ("Pre-Participation Form")*. The information required in the Pre-Participation Form may be collected online and shall include:
 - a. A comprehensive history with up-to-date information relative to concussion history, any history regarding head, face or cervical spine injury and/or any history of co-existent concussion injuries; and
 - b. Signatures of both the parent and the student;
3. During the season of participation if a student sustains a head injury outside of the extracurricular activity, his/her parent is required to complete and submit *Department Report of Head Injury During Sports Season Form* to the Athletic Director.
4. The Athletic Director will forward to the coach copies of the *Pre-Participation Forms* and all *Reports of Head Injury During Sports Season* for each student member of that coach's team. In addition, the Athletic Director will forward the *Pre-Participation Forms* indicating a history of head injury and all *Reports of Head Injury During Sports Season* to the school nurse, who will consult with the student's primary care physician and/or school physician, as needed, and athletic staff regarding whether the student will be allowed to begin (or continue) to participate and if so, whether limitations may apply.
5. In order to better manage concussions sustained by our student-athletes, the district will utilize a software tool called ImPACT (Immediate Post Concussion Assessment and Cognitive Testing). ImPACT is a computerized neuropsychological exam utilized in many professional, collegiate, and high school sports programs across the country to successfully diagnose and manage concussions. If an athlete is believed to have suffered a head injury during competition, ImPACT is used to help determine the severity of head injury and when the injury has fully healed. This non-invasive test

takes about 20-30 minutes to complete. Essentially, the ImPACT test is a physical of the brain that tracks information such as memory, reaction time, processing speed, and concentration. It is not an “IQ” test. There is no charge to the student/athlete for ImPACT testing.

Students must take a “baseline” ImPACT test prior to first participating in any of the activities listed below beginning at the Middle School level and then every two years thereafter prior to the beginning of the sports season in which they are participating.

Baseball	Ice Hockey (Boys & Girls)
Basketball (Boys & Girls)	Lacrosse (Boys & Girls)
Cheerleading	Skiing (Boys & Girls)
Field Hockey	Soccer (Boys & Girls)
Football	Softball
Gymnastics	Wrestling

Parents of students participating in Extracurricular Athletic Activities other than the contact and collision sports listed above will have the option of having their child participate in the ImPACT test. The test will be administered upon the parent's submission of a written request to the Athletic Director.

If a concussion is suspected, the athlete will be required to re-take the ImPACT test prior to resuming participation.

In the event a parent and/or student has not provided the documentation set forth above to the Athletic Director in a timely manner, or has not taken the ImPACT test as required the student will be ineligible to begin (or continue if applicable) participation in an Extracurricular Athletic Activity until all documentation has been received and reviewed by appropriate school personnel.

V. Removal Due to Head Injury and Protocols for Reentry

Any student who sustains a head injury or suspected concussion, or exhibits signs and symptoms of a concussion, or loses consciousness, even briefly, during participation in an Extracurricular Athletic Activity shall be removed from the activity immediately and may not return to the activity that day even if the condition seems to resolve itself. If there is an athletic trainer on site, the coach must immediately report the suspected injury to the trainer or on-site school nurse for a medical assessment. If no trainer or school nurse is on-site, the coach is responsible for notifying the student's parents and contacting EMS for emergency service and transport to a local hospital if in their reasonable judgment such intervention is appropriate

In all circumstances, the coach or trainer must complete a *Department Report of Head Injury During Sports Season Form* and follow all Reporting Requirements outlined below in Section

Any student removed from an Extracurricular Athletic Activity due suspected head injury must provide a *Department Post Sports-Related Head Injury Medical Clearance and Authorization Form* completed by a licensed medical professional (physician, nurse practitioner in consultation with a physician, certified athletic trainer in consultation with a physician, or neuropsychologist

in coordination with the physician managing the student's recovery) to the Athletic Director prior to the student's return to normal physical activities (including physical education class). The Athletic Director will consult with the School Nurse in reviewing such forms if appropriate. In the event a student exhibits symptoms of head injury following return to participation, the coach will immediately remove the student from the activity and will inform the Athletic Trainer, School Nurse and/or the parents in order to initiate further consultation.

VI. Graduated Reentry Plan and Medical Clearance following Diagnosis of Concussion

In the event the student has been diagnosed with a concussion, the student may not resume full participation in Extracurricular Athletic Activities until he/she has participated in a graduated re-entry plan and provided a completed *Department Post Sports-Related Head Injury Medical Clearance and Authorization Form* to the Athletic Director. If a concussion is suspected or diagnosed, the student will be required to re-take the ImPACT test, which will be made available to the student's treating physician, and used to determine when it is safe and appropriate for the injured student-athlete to return to activity.

In addition, school personnel, including but not limited to teachers, school nurse, and certified athletic trainer, along with parents shall develop a written graduated entry plan for return to academics and other school based activities, including Extracurricular Athletic Activities. Accommodations, may include, as appropriate: provision for physical or cognitive rest; graduated return to classroom studies; estimated time intervals for resuming activities; assessments by the school nurse; periodic medical assessment by a licensed medical professional (physician, nurse practitioner in consultation with a physician, certified athletic trainer in consultation with a physician, or neuropsychologist in coordination with the physician managing the student's recovery) until the student is authorized to full classroom and extracurricular activities. The school physician and/or student's physician may be consulted as appropriate in devising the graduated entry plan.

VII. Additional Communication and Reporting

The Athletic Director shall disseminate to each coach copies of the completed *Pre-Participation Form* for each member of that coach's team or student group. The information required in this Form may be provided to coaches online. The Athletic Director shall ensure that the nurse receives a copy and reviews any forms that indicate a history of head injury, with review by the school physician and certified athletic trainer if appropriate. The Athletic Director shall also ensure proper dissemination and review of any *Department Report of Head Injury During Sports Season Forms*.

All coaches are required to report any circumstances in which the student under their supervision was removed from participation for suspected head injury, suspected concussion, or loss of consciousness and the nature of the suspected injury to the student's parent in person or by telephone as soon as is practical, and at the latest, immediately after the competition or practice, with written confirmation to the parent by paper or electronic format no later than the end of the next business day. The Coach must also notify the Athletic Director and school nurse of the removal from play and the nature of the suspected injury no later than the end of the next business day. The coach is responsible for ensuring that a *Department Report of Head Injury*

During Sports Season Form has been completed and provided to the Athletic Director, parent, certified athletic trainer and school nurse.

The School Nurse shall inform the principal and guidance counselor of the injury so that an appropriate academic accommodation plan can be initiated as needed.

The School Nurse and/or Athletic Trainer may require that a student suspected of having a concussion be evaluated by a duly licensed medical professional (physician, nurse practitioner in consultation with a physician, or neuropsychologist in coordination with the physician managing the student's recovery) after the injury. Documentation regarding the results of the head injury evaluation from the duly licensed medical professional will then be required by the School Nurse or Trainer. This information will be reviewed by the School Nurse, guidance counselor, and/or athletic trainer and utilized to help coordinate the student's recovery program. Written documentation regarding student concussions will be maintained in the student health records.

VIII. Maintenance of Records and Confidentiality

Copies of all documentation received by the school department under this policy will be maintained for a minimum of three years. Such documentation includes Verification of Training Completion, which may be submitted and stored online by the Athletic Director. The School Nurse shall maintain copies of, *Pre-Participation Forms that indicate head injury/concussion history (which may be submitted and stored online)*, *Reports of Head Injury During Sports Season*, *Department Report of Head Injury During Sports Season*, *Department Post Sports Related Head Injury and Medical Clearance and Authorization Forms*, and any *Graduated Reentry Plans* that may be necessary.

Medical information received by the district in implementing this policy is part of the student health record and may be disclosed only as authorized by the laws governing student records. Generally, authorized school personnel who work *directly* with the student in an instructive (academic or athletic), administrative, or diagnostic capacity will have access to the information on a need to know basis. Authorized school personnel should be instructed not to disclose the information to others. Notwithstanding these limitations, there may be times when school officials may or must disclose health or related information to others in order to protect a student's health or safety.

IX. Notification of Policy Information to Parents and Students

The Athletic Director in consultation with the Principal shall disseminate to parents and students on annual basis information regarding this policy, including but not limited to:

1. Pre-requisites for students to participate in Extracurricular Athletic Activities, including opportunities for students and parents to fulfill their obligations to participate in training under this policy;
2. Requirements for parents to report to the Athletic Director a head injury occurring outside of school;
3. Procedures for notifying parents of a student's removal from play due to head injury;
4. Protocols for medical clearance prior to return to participation;
5. Contact information for key personnel.

In addition, information regarding this policy is available in the Oliver Ames High School Student Handbook. The Student Handbook is available at: <http://www.oliverames.org/>

School staff will work with parents of limited English proficiency to facilitate effective notice of this policy and effective communication regarding suspected head injury. In the event an interpreter is needed, parents and/or staff should contact the Principal's office.

X. Consequences

The Easton Public Schools takes the safety of student athletes seriously. All members of the school staff are expected to follow the policies and protocols set forth herein and in Massachusetts law to support the health and safety of students who participate in Extracurricular Athletic Activities. The underlying philosophy of these policies is "when in doubt, sit them out". Failure to comply with the letter or spirit of these policies could result in progressive discipline for staff and/or forfeiture of games. If students or parents have concerns that the policies are being violated, they should contact the Superintendent or Principal.

Parents are also expected to do their part in supporting the health and safety of students by ensuring that all documentation required by this policy is submitted in a timely manner. Each student must also adhere to the rules of safe play as instructed by their coaches. Students must also immediately inform a coach or other adult in the event the student believes he/she may have been injured during an activity. No student will be permitted to participate in an Extracurricular Athletic Activity unless the student and his/her parents have complied with their obligations under this policy.

Cross Ref: Mass. Gen. L. ch. 111, Section 222
105 CMR 201.000 et seq.
603 CMR 23.07 (access to student records)
Student Handbook Policies

Forms: *Pre-Participation Head Injury/ Concussion Reporting For Extracurricular Activities Form*
Link:
<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/com-health/injury/preparticipation-reporting-form.pdf>
Department Post Sports-Related Head Injury Medial Clearance and Authorization Form
Link:<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/com-health/injury/posthead-injury-clearance-form.pdf>
Department Report of Head Injury During Sports Season Form
Link:
<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/com-health/injury/in-season-report-form.pdf>

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