

Forsyth County Parks and Recreation  
Youth Sports Concussion Policy  
2011

Whereas Concussions at all levels of sports have received a great deal of attention in the past few years. Attention has increased even more recently, culminating with the NFL, NCAA and National Federation of State High School Associations testifying before the United States Congress about what each organization is doing to protect athletes from concussions. At least four states have enacted legislation dealing with the issue of head injuries sustained in athletic competitions. (ex. Zachary Lystedt Law in Washington State [http://www.tbiwashington.org/tbi\\_wa/bill1824.shtml](http://www.tbiwashington.org/tbi_wa/bill1824.shtml))

Therefore the following policy will be in effect as of July 2011 and beyond.

Objective:

To establish a policy that will provide ALL youth sport coaches associated with the Forsyth County Parks and Recreation Department with guidelines relating to how to recognize signs of a concussion, procedures for dealing with athletes and parents when a concussion is suspected, as well as mandatory rules concerning the return to action for the participant.

Criteria:

**When in doubt, sit them out! It is better to miss one game than the whole season.**

Adolescent athletes are particularly vulnerable to the effects of concussion. Once considered little more than a minor “ding” on the head, it is now understood that a concussion has the potential to result in death, or short- and long-term changes in brain function. A concussion is a brain injury that results in a temporary disruption of normal brain function. A concussion occurs when the brain is violently rocked back and forth or twisted inside the skull as a result of a blow to the head or body. Continued participation in any sport following a concussion can lead to worsening concussion symptoms, as well as increased risk for further injury to the brain, and even death.

The well-being of the athlete is of paramount concern during any athletic contest. Officials, coaches and parents are being asked to make all efforts to ensure that concussed athletes do not continue to participate. Thus, coaches, players, officials, and parents should also be looking for signs of concussion in all athletes and should immediately remove any suspected concussed athlete from play.

What to look for:

We now know that a person does not have to lose consciousness to suffer a concussion.

Any athlete 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 contest and shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health-care professional. The common signs, symptoms and behaviors of concussed athletes may include: appearing dazed or stunned, is confused about assignment or position, is unsure of game score or opponent, answers questions slowly, has a headache or “pressure” in head, nausea or vomiting, is sensitivity to light or noise, and/or just doesn’t “feel right”.

Role of Coaching Staff:

Coaches/Coaching Staff will NOT be expected to “diagnose” a concussion. That is the job of an appropriate health-care professional. Coaches/Coaching Staffs are being asked to use their best judgment in observing the signs, symptoms and behaviors, associated with concussions. If a member of a youth team coaching staff observes questionable signs, symptoms, or behavior, he/she must remove the participant from the game for further evaluation and notify the parent/guardian.

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The responsibility of further evaluating and managing the symptomatic athlete falls upon the head coach, parent/guardian or appropriate health-care professional. If an appropriate health-care professional on site determines that the athlete HAS NOT suffered a concussion, the athlete may return to play. If there is no appropriate health-care professional available to evaluate the athlete, the athlete SHOULD NOT be allowed by the coach or parent/guardian to return to play. If there is no appropriate health-care professional onsite at the time of the injury or suspected injury, the coach must receive written permission for an athlete to return to play.

It is strongly recommended that coaches participate in a free, online course on concussion management prepared by the NFHS. "Concussion in Sports" is an extremely well-prepared presentation that can be found at [www.nfhslearn.com](http://www.nfhslearn.com).

#### Role of Game Officials:

Neither officials, nor coaches, will be expected to "diagnose" a concussion, as that is the job of an appropriate health-care professional. Officials are being asked to use their best judgment in observing the signs, symptoms and behaviors, associated with concussions. Officials will not be asked to make what could be perceived to be a medical opinion. If an official observes questionable signs, symptoms, or behavior, the official must notify the coach and remove the participant from the game for further evaluation.

The game official is not responsible for the sideline evaluation or management of the athlete after he or she is removed from play. The responsibility of further evaluating and managing the symptomatic athlete falls upon the head coach, appropriate health-care professional. If an appropriate health-care professional on site determines that the athlete HAS NOT suffered a concussion, the athlete may return to play. If there is no appropriate health-care professional available to evaluate the athlete, the athlete SHOULD NOT be allowed by the coach or parent to return to play. The official does not need written permission for an athlete to return to play, nor does the official need to verify the credentials of the appropriate health-care professional. Ensuring compliance is the responsibility of the head coach and NOT the game official.

#### FCPRD Mandated Course of Action:

1. Remove athlete from competition.
2. Notify parent or guardian.
3. Any athlete suspected of having a concussion should be evaluated by an appropriate health-care professional the day of the "injury". NOTE: An "appropriate health-care professional" should be individuals knowledgeable in the evaluation and management of sports-related concussions and may, include MDs, DOs and certified athletic trainers.
4. No athlete should return to play or practice on the same day after a concussion has been diagnosed.
5. Any athlete with a concussion should be medically cleared by an appropriate healthcare professional prior to resuming participation in any practice or competition. The formulation of a gradual return to play protocol should be a part of the medical clearance. NOTE: Athletes with continued concussion symptoms are at significant risk for recurrent, cumulative and even catastrophic consequences of a second concussive injury. Such risks are minimized if the athlete is allowed time to recover from the concussion and return to play decisions are carefully made. No athlete should return-to-sport or other at-risk participation when symptoms of concussion are present and recovery is ongoing.

These guidelines should be applied to all sports related activity.

#### Compliance:

Any coach that disregards the safety and well being of a youth sport(s) participant as it relates to concussions will be suspended indefinitely from coaching.

Additionally, any coach that misuses this policy to prohibit an otherwise, healthy, fit, uninjured player from participating will be suspended indefinitely from coaching.

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Require all Head Coaches to sign a “pledge” that will be kept on file, to insure acknowledgement of the policy.

Require Youth Athletic Associations to issue informational material to parent(s) at the time of registration or at 1<sup>st</sup> team meeting.

Place Policy on County Website and require the Youth Athletic Associations to link to the policy.

Place link(s) to relative reference material on County Website. Links to be updated as needed or as new information becomes available.