



## Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association

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### TENNESSEE SECONDARY SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION CONCUSSION POLICY

Beginning with the 2010-11 school year, TSSAA implemented a new concussion policy that all member schools must follow. Every individual involved in athletics must become more proactive in identifying and treating athletes who show signs of concussions. In order to address this critical issue, the NFHS has drafted the following language and made it a part of 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 student-athletes that show signs of a concussion during athletic participation. It is very important that every administrator, coach, parent, official, athlete, and health-care provider know the symptoms and steps to take when dealing with student-athletes that display signs of a possible concussion. Concussion can be a serious health issue and should be treated as such.

The TSSAA Board of Control approved the following "TSSAA Concussion Return to Play Form" that must be used in practice and games. The form was adapted from the Acute Concussion Evaluation (ACE) plan on the CDC website ([www.cdc.gov/injury](http://www.cdc.gov/injury)). It contains specific instructions that shall be followed before an athlete can return to sports. The form must be completed and signed by a licensed medical doctor (M.D.), Osteopathic Physician (D.O.), or a Clinical Neuropsychologist with Concussion Training before an athlete that has been removed from practice or a game may return to participate. A copy of the form must be kept on file at the school by an administrator.

TSSAA is asking the administration of every TSSAA/TMSAA member school to meet with their coaching staff and review this policy prior to the beginning of every sports season. The state office will distribute this information to as many officials, athletic trainers, and health-care providers as possible. We ask that school personnel do the same in their area. This information should also be given to all parents and student-athletes.

Following a copy of "Signs/Symptoms of Concussion" to help with the educational process. Please make sure every individual involved in athletics at your school has and understands this information. **The NFHS has also developed a free 20-minute course online entitled "Concussion in Sport – What you Need to Know" that we encourage every individual to take. It can be accessed at [www.nfhslearn.com](http://www.nfhslearn.com). Athletic Directors at all member schools are asked to take the lead and require every coach in their school to complete the course and make the information available to parents.** Failure to do so is not an option. Our student-athletes' safety must come first.

If you have any questions regarding this, please feel free to contact our office.

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## PROTOCOL FOR REGISTERED TSSAA OFFICIALS DURING TSSAA/TMSAA CONTESTS

1. Determine prior to the start of the contest whether or not a school has access to a **designated health care provider** during the contest.
2. Continue to monitor players for possible signs of injury as usual.
3. Remove any player that shows signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion per NFHS rules.
4. Inform the head coach that the player is being removed for showing signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion.
5. The school shall have the player examined by their **designated health care provider**. If the **designated health care provider** determines that the student has not sustained a concussion, the head coach may so advise the officials during an appropriate stoppage of play and the athlete may re-enter competition pursuant to contest rules.
6. The head coach is in charge of getting clearance from the school's designated health-care provider.
7. If the school does not have access to a **designated health care provider**, or if the school's **designated health care provider** suspects that the athlete may have sustained a concussion, the only means for an athlete to return to practice or play is for the student to be evaluated and cleared by a licensed medical doctor (M.D.), Osteopathic Physician (D.O.) or a Clinical Neuropsychologist with Concussion Training.
8. If signs, symptoms and behaviors consistent with a concussion are observed by an official, and a **designated health care provider** is not available to evaluate the student athlete, the "TSSAA Concussion Return to Play" form MUST be completed and signed by a licensed medical doctor (M.D.), Osteopathic Physician (D. O.) or a Clinical Neuropsychologist with concussion training, and shown to the official(s) by the head coach prior to a student-athlete returning to participate in a contest the same day.
9. If a player that has been removed by an official for showing signs, symptoms, and behaviors consistent with a concussion is allowed to return to play during the contest, an "Unusual Occurrence Form" shall be filed with the state office by the official within 24 hours of the incident.
10. Officials have no role in the diagnosis of a concussion. NFHS Rules do require that the officials remove players from the contest when signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion are observed and the above written protocol must be followed.

**Designated Health Care Providers** – Certified Athletic Trainer, Certified Nurse Practitioner, Physicians Assistant, Doctor of Medicine, Osteopathic Physician

## **PROTOCOL FOR SCHOOLS WHEN PLAYERS EXHIBIT SIGNS, SYMPTOMS, OR BEHAVIORS CONSISTENT WITH A CONCUSSION DURING PRACTICE OR COMPETITION**

1. Continue to monitor players for possible signs of injury as usual.
2. Remove any player that shows signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion from the activity or competition.
3. The school shall have the player examined by the school's **designated health care provider**. If the **designated health care provider** determines that the student has not sustained a concussion, the player may return to the activity or competition.
4. The head coach shall be responsible for obtaining clearance from the school's designated health care provider.
5. If the school does not have access to a **designated health care provider**, or if the school's **designated health care provider** suspects that the athlete may have sustained a concussion, the only means for an athlete to return to practice or play is for the student to be evaluated and cleared by a licensed medical doctor (M.D.), Osteopathic Physician (D.O.) or a Clinical Neuropsychologist with Concussion Training. The person clearing the student must complete and sign the "TSSAA Concussion Return to Play" form. Schools must keep this form on file.

**Designated Health Care Providers** – Certified Athletic Trainer, Certified Nurse Practitioner, Physicians Assistant, Doctor of Medicine, Osteopathic Physician

## **Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion**

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury that interferes with normal brain function. An athlete does not have to lose consciousness (be “knocked out”) to have suffered a concussion.

### **Common Symptoms of Concussion Include:**

- Headache
- Fogginess
- Difficulty concentrating
- Easily confused
- Slowed thought processes
- Difficulty with memory
- Nausea
- Lack of energy, tiredness
- Dizziness, poor balance
- Blurred vision
- Sensitive to light and sounds
- Mood changes – irritable, anxious, or tearful

### **Suggested Concussion Management:**

1. No athlete should return to play (RTP) or practice on the same day of a concussion
2. Any athlete suspected of having a concussion should be evaluated by an appropriate health-care professional that day.
3. Any athlete with a concussion should be medically cleared by an appropriate health-care professional prior to resuming participation in any practice or competition.
4. After medical clearance, RTP should follow a step-wise protocol with provisions for delayed RTP based upon return of any signs or symptoms.

For more information, the NFHS has also developed a free 20-minute course online entitled “Concussion in Sport – What You Need to Know” that we encourage every individual to take. It can be accessed at [www.nfhslearn.com](http://www.nfhslearn.com).



# TSSAA CONCUSSION RETURN TO PLAY FORM



This form is adapted from the Acute Concussion Evaluation (ACE) care plan on the CDC web site ([www.cdc.gov/injury](http://www.cdc.gov/injury)). All medical providers are encouraged to review this site if they have questions regarding the latest information on the evaluation and care of the scholastic athlete following a concussion injury. **Please initial any recommendations that you select.**

Athlete's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Injury: \_\_\_\_\_

**This return to play plan is based on today's evaluation.** Date of Evaluation: \_\_\_\_\_

Care plan completed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Return to this office Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Return to school on (date): \_\_\_\_\_

- RETURN TO SPORTS:**
- 1. Athletes should not return to practice or play the same day that their head injury occurred.**
  - 2. Athletes should never return to play or practice if they still have ANY symptoms.**
  - 3. Athletes, be sure that your coach and/or athletic trainer are aware of your injury, symptoms, and has the contact information for the treating health care provider.**

**The following are the return to sports recommendations at the present time:**

PHYSICAL EDUCATION: \_\_\_\_\_ Do Not Return to PE class at this time. \_\_\_\_\_ May Return to PE class.

- SPORTS: \_\_\_\_\_ Do not return to sports practice or competition at this time.
- \_\_\_\_\_ May gradually return to sports practices under the supervision of the health care provider for your school or team.
- \_\_\_\_\_ May be advanced back to competition after phone conversation with treating health care provider.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Must return to the treating health care provider for final clearance to return to competition.
- OR- \_\_\_\_\_ Cleared for full participation in all activities without restriction.

**Treating Health Care Provider Information (Please Print/Stamp)**

Please check:

\_\_\_\_\_ Medical Doctor (M.D.) \_\_\_\_\_ Osteopathic Physician (D.O.) \_\_\_\_\_ Clinical Neuropsychologist w/ Concussion Training

Provider's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Provider's Office Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Provider's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Office Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Gradual Return to Play Plan**

Return to play should occur in gradual steps beginning with light aerobic exercise only to increase your heart rate (e.g. stationary cycle); moving to increasing your heart rate with movement (e.g. running); then adding controlled contact if appropriate; and finally return to sports competition.

Pay careful attention to your symptoms and your thinking and concentration skills at each stage or activity. After completion of each step without recurrence of symptoms, you can move to the next level of activity the next day. **Move to the next level of activity only if you do not experience any symptoms at the present level.** If your symptoms return, let your health care provider know, return to the first level and restart the program gradually.

**Day 1:** Low levels of physical activity (i.e. symptoms do not come back during or after the activity). This includes walking, light jogging, light stationary biking, and light weightlifting (low weight – moderate reps, no bench, no squats).

**Day 2:** Moderate levels of physical activity with body/head movement. This includes moderate jogging, brief running, moderate intensity on the stationary cycle, moderate intensity weightlifting (reduce time and or reduced weight from your typical routine).

**Day 3:** Heavy non-contact physical activity. This includes sprinting/running, high intensity stationary cycling, completing the regular lifting routine, non-contact sport specific drills (agility – with 3 planes of movement).

**Day 4:** Sports Specific practice.

**Day 5:** Full contact in a controlled drill or practice.

**Day 6:** Return to competition.