



Florida High School Athletic Association  
1801 NW 80 Blvd., Gainesville, FL 32606

August 23, 2011

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** FHSAA Board of Directors

**FROM:** Dr. Roger Dearing, FHSAA Executive Director  
Dr. Peggy Jones, FHSAA Associate Executive Director for Athletic Services  
Gary V. Pigott, FHSAA Senior Director of Athletics

**SUBJECT:** FHSAA Concussion Action Plan

---

The following is the standard concussion information we will provide to FHSAA member schools, contest officials, health-care professionals, media and parents. In September, we will review this information with the FHSAA Sports Medicine Advisory Committee for their review and approval. Any amendments will be made at that time. Please contact us if you have any additional questions.

**NFHS Rules Book Language:**

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 or practice and shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health-care professional as defined by FHSAA. (Please see NFHS Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion in the Appendix in the back of each NFHS Rules Book).

**Definition of Appropriate Health-Care Professional in Florida:**

“An interscholastic student-athlete who has been removed from play may not return to play until the student-athlete is evaluated by a licensed health-care professional familiar with the evaluation and management of concussion and receives written clearance to return to play from that health-care professional.”

In Florida, an appropriate health-care professional (AHCP) is defined as either a licensed physician (MD, as per Chapter 458, Florida Statutes), a licensed osteopathic physician (DO, as per Chapter 459, Florida Statutes), a licensed physicians assistant under the supervision of a MD/DO (as per Chapters 458.347 and 459.022, Florida Statutes) or a health care professional trained in the management of concussions. If available, a certified athletic trainer (ATC) can assist with the sideline evaluation of a student-athlete when a student-athlete is sent out of a game by a contest official, but cannot provide the written clearance to return to play (refer to above).

**Mechanics for Removal from Athletic Contest:**

The NFHS concussion rule calls for the immediate removal of the participant from the contest or practice. The revised language reflects an increasing focus on safety, given that the vast majority of concussions do not involve a loss of consciousness. The change in this rule simply calls for contest officials to be cognizant of athletes who display signs, symptoms or behaviors of a concussion (see NFHS Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion) and immediately stop play for injury evaluation within the rules of the game. At that point, the contest official’s job is done. It is important to note that the responsibility of the contest official is limited to activities that occur on the field, court, or mat.

Once the participant has been removed from a contest due to a suspected concussion, the coach, school and appropriate health-care professional(s) assumes full responsibility for that athlete’s further evaluation and safety. If available, a certified athletic trainer (ATC) can assist with the sideline evaluation of a student-athlete when a student-athlete is sent out of a game or practice.

The hierarchy to determine if the student-athlete is removed from play for the duration of the contest is the following in descending order:

- MD/DO
- Certified athletic trainer (ATC)
- School administrator
- Athletic director
- Head coach

**Return To Play (RTP) Criteria: Suggested Concussion Management**

1. No athlete should return to play (RTP) or practice on the same day of a suspected concussion. "When in doubt, sit them out!"
2. Any athlete suspected of having a concussion should be evaluated by an appropriate health-care professional that day or within 24 hours.
3. Any athlete with a suspected concussion should be medically cleared by an appropriate health-care professional (as defined above) prior to resuming participation in any practice or competition.
4. After medical clearance, return to play should follow a step-wise protocol with provisions for delayed return to play based upon the return of any signs or symptoms. The SCAT2 is a suggested sport concussion assessment tool.

**Education on Management of Concussions:**

All FHSAA member school head coaches and paid/supplemented coaches are required to view the FREE online education course "*Concussion in Sports – What You Need to Know*". This NFHS concussion course may be viewed online at [www.nfhslearn.com](http://www.nfhslearn.com). All member school personnel, contest officials, student-athletes, parents and media are encouraged to educate themselves by viewing the FREE online education course "*Concussion in Sports – What You Need to Know*". This free NFHS concussion course may be viewed online at [www.nfhslearn.com](http://www.nfhslearn.com).

This plan was recommended at the Sports Medicine Advisory Committee Meeting on September 1, 2010. Gary Pigott, FHSAA Senior Director of Athletics, is a member of the Florida Concussion Task Force.