

GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS VIRGIN ISLANDS BOARD OF EDUCATION



The Virgin Islands Board of Education Sports Concussion Policy

1.0 General Information

1.01 Through Act 7233 § 60(b)(b), the Virgin Islands Board of Education (Board) has been charged with the responsibility of developing and distributing to each public school, guidelines on policies to inform and educate coaches, student-athletes, and their parents or guardians of the nature and risk of concussions, criteria for removal from and return to play, and risks of not reporting the injury and continuing to play.

1.02 A concussion is a type of brain injury ranging from mild to severe and is one of the most commonly reported injuries in children and adolescents who participate in sports and recreational activities. It is important to recognize that many sport-related concussions *do not* result in loss of consciousness and, therefore, all suspected head injuries should be taken seriously. The risk of catastrophic injuries or death is significant when a concussion or head injury is not properly evaluated and managed. Continuing to play sports with a concussion or symptoms of head injury leaves the young athlete especially vulnerable to greater injury and even death.

1.03 The Virgin Islands Board of Education agrees with the 29th Legislature that there is a critical need for standards for concussion and head injury to prevent athletes from prematurely returning to play, resulting in actual or potential physical injury or death to youth athletes in the Virgin Islands.

2.0 Concussion Policy Implementation

2.01 The following concussion policy has been adopted¹ by the Virgin Islands Board of Education and is to be followed by the Virgin Islands Department of Education (the Department) within the public school system for managing athletes suspected of sustaining a concussion. The Department shall develop guidelines, policies and procedures regarding concussion management protocol, including the identification and handling of suspected concussions in student athletes by incorporating the following guidelines:

2.02 Inform and educate coaches, student-athletes, and their parents or guardians of the nature and risk of concussions

2.03 Each student-athlete, the student-athlete's parent or guardian, coach, and volunteer shall review, on an annual basis, information on concussions provided by the Department (see Exhibit ___ - sample concussion fact sheets).

2.04 After having reviewed materials describing the short and long-term health effects of concussions, each student-athlete, the student-athlete's parent or guardian, coach, and

¹ derived from the most recent literature on sport-related concussion included in the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill policies

volunteer shall sign a statement acknowledging that they have 1) read and understood such information, and 2) accept the responsibility for reporting injuries and illnesses to the appropriate parties (see exhibit ___ - sample Student-Athlete Concussion Statement)

- 2.06 Coaches and volunteers must also acknowledge the responsibility for referring any athlete to the medical staff suspected of sustaining a concussion and acknowledge that they have read and understand the Department's specific guidelines, policies and procedures concerning concussions, i.e. concussion management protocol.
- 2.07 All persons responsible for student-athletes should reinforce the importance of reporting any suspected injuries and illnesses to the Department and medical provider, including signs and symptoms of concussions.
- 2.08 At a minimum, any medical provider performing assessments should be provided with the Department's information sheet on concussions, along with the Department's specific policies and procedures concerning concussions, i.e. concussion management protocol.
- 2.09 The *Department* will coordinate the distribution, educational session, signing, and collection of the necessary documents on an annual basis.
- 2.10 The *Department* will maintain the signed documents in the student-athlete's medical file at the school site where he or she is attending
- 2.11 A copy of the Board's policy, along with the Department's specific policies and procedures i.e. *Concussion Policy and management protocol*, will also be distributed to each of the schools, the athletic training facilities, and the physical education coordinator in each district.
- 2.12 The Department will coordinate an annual meeting each May to review and update their Concussion Policy with the Board. Any changes to the policy will be effective the subsequent school year, unless otherwise agreed upon.
- 2.13 The Department will notify all student-athletes of Act 7336, requiring all students participating in "interscholastic athletic competitions or who are candidates for an interscholastic athletic team to satisfactorily pass a medical evaluation by a licensed health care provider, each year, prior to participating in interscholastic athletic competitions or engaging in any practice, tryout, workout or other physical activity associated with the student's candidacy for an interscholastic athletic team."

3.0 Criteria for removal from and return to play

- 3.01 A student-athlete suspected by that student-athlete's coach, athletic trainer, or school physician or school nurse of sustaining a concussion or brain injury in a practice or game must be removed from the activity immediately...
- 3.02 In the event of a suspected concussion, the athlete's symptoms, neurocognitive function, and balance should be evaluated.
- 3.03 The findings of these post-injury assessments are then to be compared to the mandatory pre-season annual physical examinations, conducted on all student athletes, participating in contact sports during the year.
- 3.04 Any athlete sustaining a concussion during the previous season is also re-baseline tested at the start of the next season.
- 3.05 Any student-athlete diagnosed with a concussion shall not return to activity until medical clearance is received. for the remainder of that day.
- 3.06 Medical clearance will be determined by the medical provider or team involved with

management of the concussion prior to a student-athlete's return to play.

3.07 Allow the student-athlete to return to play only with the permission from a healthcare professional with experience evaluating for concussion.

3.08 Establish specific guidelines for length of time in days and/or weeks for return to play based on level of severity, number of concussive occurrences, and/or comparison to pre-season base line testing.

4.0 Steps after Medical clearance

Once the athlete is medically cleared to return to physical activity, coaches will be required to follow a stepwise sequence to return students to full activity. Each step should be separated by 24 hours and the athlete should not be allowed to advance to the next step if symptoms reappear:

Step 1: Athlete may begin low-impact activity such as light jogging or riding a stationary bicycle;

Step 2: Athlete may initiate aerobic activity fundamental to specific sport such as running or plyometrics.

Step 3: Athlete may begin non-contact sport drills specific to sport (dribbling, passing, catching, batting, etc.).

Step 4: Athlete may resume full contact sport activity in practice setting

5.0 Requirements of training

At a minimum, the following training on managing athletes suspected of sustaining a concussion must be included in the Department's policy and protocol:

5.01 The recognition and proper response to concussions must be taught to all personnel.

5.02 Timelines to ensure that, to the extent practicable, every coach receives the training before the beginning of the season for the school athletic team should be established.

5.03 Act 7336's provision that "all coaches attending interscholastic competitions, tryouts, workouts, or other physical activities associated with the student's candidacy for an interscholastic athletic team shall be trained and certified in administering cardiopulmonary resuscitation ("CPR") and trained in the use of automated external defibrillators" must be implemented.

5.04 The Department shall require adequate medical personnel be present at all sporting events to include practices and competitions. Adequate personnel can include physicians, physical therapist, athletic trainers, nurses, coaching staff, and/or volunteers.

5.05 The Department shall develop a policy mandating the necessary "adequate medical personnel" as defined on a sliding scale based on injury risk stratification. This scale will include but not be limited to level on contact, number of participants, and likelihood of injury.

6.0 Medical Risks of not reporting the injury and continuing to play

Concussions are cumulative and recovery can be daunting. Each time a concussion occurs in an individual, it is easier to get another concussion in the future and the short and long-term effects of each repeated concussion becomes more severe. Even one concussion can lead to severe short and long-term effects such as:

- 6.01 Dementia
- 6.02 Epilepsy
- 6.03 Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE)
- 6.04 Second Impact Syndrome
- 6.05 Long-Term Memory Loss
- 6.06 Slowing of some types of movements
- 6.07 Depression
- 6.08 Emotional Distress

7.0 Responsibilities/penalties for non-reporting of concussions

7.01 Student athlete responsibility

7.01 a A student must complete a full physical before participating in any interscholastic sport (individual or team sport): he/she will NOT be allowed to participate in any sport activity (to include training or practices) before submitting a full physical report.

7.01b If a parent refuses to sign the student's concussion policy for an interscholastic sport, the student shall be barred from participation.

7.01c If a student does not report an injury to a coach, referee, or medical personnel while he or she is participating in an interscholastic sport, a written reprimand will be placed in his/her cumulative file at the participating school and a verbal warning will be administered to both the athlete and parent for the first offense. The student must then secure full medical clearance. If it is determined that a student intentionally did not report the incident, the student will be suspended from sport activity.

7.01d If a student exhibits any concussion symptoms as outlined in this policy, he or she must secure full written clearance from a medical doctor before returning to any sport activity. Failure to comply with this provision shall result in the banning of the student from any further participation in individual or team sport until medical clearance is received.

7.02 Parental responsibility

7.02a Parents must complete a concussion policy form and return it to the school before students can participate in sport activities. Failure to do so will result in the student not being able to participate in any sport activity (individual or team sport).

7.02b The student-athlete must complete a physical before participating in individual or group sports activities. Failure to comply will result in the student's shall be banned from participating in any sports activities.

7.02c If a student-athlete shows signs of a concussion, the parent is responsible to report the symptoms to a medical doctor and to the coach. Failure to comply will result in the student's not being able to participate in any sport activities.

7.02d The parent must ensure that the student has medical clearance after a concussion to ensure that he/she is medically ready to return to sports activities. No student will be allowed to return to any sporting activity without this clearance.

7.02e It is the parent's or guardian's responsibility to ensure that students comply with these guidelines.

7.03 Coach/manager responsibility

7.03a The coach or manager shall require each student-athlete to sign a concussion policy before the beginning of the league. Failure to comply will result in the team's ineligibility to participate in any league activities (to include practice).

7.03b The coach or manager must educate players about the seriousness of concussions and the steps that should be taken if a student-athlete believes he/she has a concussion. Failure to comply will result in a) a first-time offense – a written warning b) a second offense – a two-game suspension. Another infringement will result in a year's suspension.

7.03c If a coach or manager observes concussion symptoms in a student-athlete, he/she must immediately seek medical attention for the student-athlete. The athlete should not be returned to any sport activity until he/she has medical clearance. Failure to comply with this edict shall result in the immediate suspension of the coach or manager until a hearing is held by the Department of Education to ascertain the facts about the non-compliance.

7.03d A coach or manager must complete training in the identification and treatment of concussions. If the coach or manager does not receive this training, then he or she cannot participate in coaching or managing until such time as he/she has received the training.

7.03e A coach or manager must ensure that each athlete completes a physical before the beginning of the season. Failure to comply will result in the team not being able to participate in the sports activities. Coaches must teach safe play and safe practice.

8.0 Health, Wellness & Safety Awareness for Sport Activities.

8.01 The Virgin Islands Board of Education shall promote healthy and safe opportunities for all students involved in : before, competitive, interscholastic , during and after school educational and physical activities on and off school campuses which are authorized and supervised by the Department of Education.

Appendix A - Sample forms and other information

Adapted from the CDC and the 3rd International Conference in Sport

VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Concussion Information Form

A concussion is a brain injury and all brain injuries are serious. They are caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head, or by a blow to another part of the body with the force transmitted to the head. They can range from mild to severe and can disrupt the way the brain normally works. Even though most concussions are mild, **all concussions are potentially serious and may result in complications including prolonged brain damage and death if not recognized and managed properly.** In other words, even a “ding” or a bump on the head can be serious. You can’t see a concussion and most sports concussions occur without loss of consciousness. Signs and symptoms of concussion may show up right after the injury or can take hours or days to fully appear. If your child reports any symptoms of concussion, or if you notice the symptoms or signs of concussion yourself, seek medical attention right away.

Symptoms may include one or more of the following:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Headaches• “Pressure in head”• Nausea or vomiting• Neck pain• Balance problems or dizziness• Blurred, double, or fuzzy vision• Sensitivity to light or noise• Feeling sluggish or slowed down• Feeling foggy or groggy• Drowsiness• Change in sleep patterns | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Amnesia• “Don’t feel right”• Fatigue or low energy• Sadness• Nervousness or anxiety• Irritability• More emotional• Confusion• Concentration or memory problems (forgetting game plays)• Repeating the same question/comment |
|--|--|

Signs observed by teammates, parents and coaches include:

- Appears dazed
- Vacant facial expression
- Confused about assignment
- Forgets plays
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily or displays incoordination
- Answers questions slowly
- Slurred speech
- Shows behavior or personality changes
- Can’t recall events prior to hit
- Can’t recall events after hit
- Seizures or convulsions
- Any change in typical behavior or personality
- Loses consciousness

Sport Concussion Alert Form

What can happen if my child keeps on playing with a concussion or returns to soon?

Athletes with the signs and symptoms of concussion should be removed from play immediately. Continuing to play with the signs and symptoms of a concussion leaves the young athlete especially vulnerable to greater injury. There is an increased risk of significant damage from a concussion for a period of time after that concussion occurs, particularly if the athlete suffers another concussion before completely recovering from the first one (second impact syndrome). This can lead to prolonged recovery, or even to severe brain swelling with devastating and even fatal consequences. It is well known that adolescent or teenage athletes will often under report symptoms of injuries, and concussions are no different. As a result, education of administrators, coaches, parents and students is the key for the student-athlete's safety.

If you think your child has suffered a concussion

Any athlete even suspected of suffering a concussion should be removed from the game or practice immediately. No athlete may return to activity after an apparent head injury or concussion, regardless of how mild it seems or how quickly symptoms clear, without medical clearance. Close observation of the athlete should continue for several hours. You should also inform your child's coach if you think that your child may have a concussion Remember it is better to miss one game than miss the whole season. And when in doubt, the athlete sits out.

For current and up-to-date information on concussions you can go to:

<http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/youth.html>

Student-athlete Name Printed

Student-athlete Signature

Date

Parent or Legal Guardian Printed

Parent or Legal Guardian Signature

Date

17 V.I.C. § 60b (2013)

§ 60b. Concussions; legislative findings, guidelines, procedure, training (a)

The Legislature finds that: (1) Concussions are one of the most commonly reported injuries in children and adolescents who participate in sports and recreational activities. (2) The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that as many as 3,800,000 sports-related and recreation-related concussions occur in the United States each year. (3) A concussion is caused by a blow or motion to the head or body which causes the brain to move rapidly inside the skull. (4) The risk of catastrophic injuries or death is significant when a concussion or head injury is not properly evaluated and managed. (5) Concussions are a type of brain injury that can range from mild to severe and can disrupt the way the brain normally works. (6) Concussions can occur in any organized or unorganized sport or recreational activity and can result from a fall or from players colliding with each other, the ground, or with obstacles. Concussions occurs with or without loss of consciousness, but the vast majority occur without loss of consciousness. (7) Continuing to play sports with a concussion or symptoms of head injury leaves the young athlete especially vulnerable to greater injury and even death. (8) The Legislature recognizes that there is a critical need for standards for concussion and head injury to prevent athletes from prematurely returning to play, resulting in actual or potential physical injury or death to youth athletes in the Virgin Islands. (b) The Board shall develop and distribute to each public school guidelines on policies to inform and educate coaches, student-athletes, and their parents or guardians of the nature and risk of concussions, criteria for removal from and return to play, and risks of not reporting the injury and continuing to play. The Department shall develop policies and procedures regarding the identification and handling of suspected concussions in student-athletes. (c) In order to participate in any extracurricular physical activity, each student-athlete and the student-athlete's parent or guardian shall review, on an annual basis, information on concussions provided by the Department. After having reviewed materials describing the short- and long-term health effects of concussions, each student-athlete and the student-athlete's parent or guardian shall sign a statement acknowledging receipt of such information, in a manner approved by the Board of Education.

(d) A student-athlete suspected by that student-athlete's coach, athletic trainer, or school physician or school nurse of sustaining a concussion or brain injury in a practice or game must be removed from the activity at that time. (e) A student-athlete who has been removed from play, evaluated, and suspected to have a concussion or brain injury may not return to play any time during that same week nor until evaluated by an appropriate licensed health care provider as determined by the Board and in receipt of written clearance to return to play from such licensed health care provider. (f) As used in this subsection, "coach" means a person who instructs or trains members on a school athletic team, as identified by criteria established by the Board. (1) The Department of Education shall ensure that coaches receive annual training to learn how to recognize the symptoms of a concussion and how to seek proper medical treatment for a person suspected of having a concussion; (2) The board shall establish by regulations the requirements of the training described in paragraph (1) of this subsection, but the training must include: (A) The recognition and proper response to concussions; (B) Timelines to ensure that, to the extent practicable, every coach receives the training described in subparagraph (A) of this paragraph before the beginning of the season for the school athletic team; and (C) Such other requirements as the Board may consider appropriate. **HISTORY:** --Added Oct. 26, 2010, No. 7233, § 39, Sess. L. 2010, pp. 261-263.

Approved by the 17th Virgin Islands Board of Education on Saturday, March 16, 2013.

Attested to by



Oswin Sewer, Sr., Chairman



Terrence T. Joseph, Secretary

March 16, 2013

Date

