

Safety in Youth Sports Act becomes Law in Pennsylvania

Governor Corbett signed the Safety in Youth Sports Act in a ceremony at Lower Dauphin High School, Dauphin County. The state General Assembly passed it on November 1. The legislation is Senate Bill 200, introduced by Sen. Patrick M. Browne (R-Lehigh). It was shepherded through the House by Rep. Timothy P. Briggs (D-Montgomery), who had introduced the companion bill, House Bill 200.

This bill establishes standards for managing concussions to student athletes. In order to return to play the athlete must be cleared by a licensed psychologist trained in neuropsychology, by a physician who is trained in the evaluation and management of concussions, or by certain other health care providers under the supervision of the physician. The Pennsylvania Psychological Association's advocacy was instrumental in this bill's passage. The association's past president, Dr. Mark Hogue stated, "This new law will be extremely important to any athlete who suffers a concussion. Athletes who return to play prematurely are at risk of a second concussion, which can be life-threatening." Dr. Hogue is a clinical and sport psychologist from Erie.

The bill will require the state Departments of Health and Education to develop and post on their websites information on the nature of concussions in athletic activities and the risks associated with continuing to play or practice after a concussion. Student-athletes and their parents or guardians must sign an acknowledgment of receipt of an information sheet on concussions prior to participation in athletics. It will require coaches to complete a concussion management certification training course before coaching any athletic activity. During an athletic contest

coaches will be required to remove athletes from competition if they exhibit signs of a concussion.

The legislation will become effective on July 1, 2012, in time for the next school year. It does not pertain to private schools, but only to public schools. It covers interscholastic athletics as well as other sports associated with a school entity, and includes cheerleading, practices, and scrimmages.

Information for 2012–2013

The State law in Pennsylvania regarding concussions states that any athlete exhibiting the signs and symptoms of a concussion or a traumatic brain injury must be removed from the game or practice and must be evaluated by the appropriate medical professional before returning to play.

A coach or parent **may not return** an athlete to play following a concussion, a written release from the above list of appropriate medical professional must be obtained.

Mandatory education is important for all athletes, parents and coaches regarding the signs and symptoms of a concussion or traumatic brain injury. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is an excellent resource for Concussion in Sport and Injury Prevention and control. Information is available from the following sites:

- * [**Injury Prevention & Control: Traumatic Brain Injury**](#)
- * [**Concussionwise SPORT for Parents**](#)

2. Student-athletes and their parents or guardians must sign an acknowledgement of receipt of an information sheet on concussions prior to participation in athletics,

The newly revised PIAA Comprehensive Initial Pre-participation Physical Evaluation Form (CIPPE) is available online to view and print.

Page 3 contains the requirement that parents acknowledge the risk of concussion and traumatic brain injury in sport and sign accordingly.

3. Coaches Concussion Management Certification Required

All coaches of interscholastic athletic teams, other coaches of sports associated with Laurel Highlands School District, and cheerleading sponsors will be required to take the online certification course sponsored by the NFHS.

For all coaches for the 2012-2013 school year, the course needs to be completed after July 1, 2012 and prior to the Official start of their respective season. The certificate of completion should be given to the athletic office to be kept on file before the first day of the official start

date of a season. Any coach or sponsor not completing the course and having the certificate on file will *not* be permitted to coach.

Coaches hired after the start of the season will be obligated to complete the course, and have it on file prior to their start date of that respective season.

The certification is good for only one year, and must be taken again the following year after July 1, 2012.

The NFHS online course, “Concussion in Sports – What You Need to Know”. It is a complimentary online course designed to familiarize those associated with interscholastic athletics on the signs, symptoms, and treatment related to concussion in sports. The only requirement is a quick and easy registration at www.nfhslearn.com.

Return to Play

Laurel Highlands uses a 5 Step Return to play protocol that will be implemented for all Laurel Highlands athletes that suffer a concussion. Graduated return to play is used to safely return an athlete to participation and will be administered by the Licensed Athletic Trainers at Laurel Highlands (under the direction of a Licensed Physician). The return to play protocol will begin once that athlete is symptom free and returned to baseline level (if available). It is designed to increase the exertional activity under the supervision of the licensed athletic trainer. Each step must be completed while symptom free before return to play is considered.

If a concussion occurs out of season, either the PIAA physical form or the section 6/7 forms from the PIAA physical form must be completed to reflect clearance to return to play.

An athlete may not return to athletic participation until:

- Symptom free
- Cleared by licensed physician
- Return to baseline testing score if available
- Successfully complete the 5 step return to play protocol with the LH athletic trainers

Baseline Testing Information

Impact baseline testing is not mandatory and is not required to participate in a sport at The Laurel Highlands School District. It is only one tool available to determine return to play following a concussion. A licensed physician will take many factors into consideration when returning an athlete to play following a concussion.

Impact baseline testing is available to all athletes through the Laurel Highlands Athletic Department (Impact baseline testing are administered by the Laurel Highlands athletic trainer).

Signs and Symptoms of a Concussion

- Loss of Consciousness
- Clear fluid from nose/ears
- Numbness/Paralysis
- Severe Headache/Deep Throbbing
- Dizziness
- Confusion

- Loss of Coordination
- Ringing in the ears
- Blurred/Double Vision
- Unequal Pupil Size
- No Pupil Reaction to Light
- Nausea/Vomiting
- Slurred Speech
- Convulsions/Tremors
- Sleepiness/Grogginess
- Behavior/Personality Changes
- Inability to remember events prior to injury
- Inability to remember events after the injury
- Sensitivity to Light/Noise

It is important to report all injuries to the certified athletic trainer, coach, or school nurse. An athlete with any of the previously listed signs or symptoms should be removed from practice and evaluated by the certified athletic trainer and/or team physician as needed. The athlete should not be given any medication within the first 24 hours, unless directed by a physician. The athlete should also be awakened every two hours throughout the night to monitor their symptoms, as well as, problem solving and critical thinking skills. If the athlete's symptoms are altered, then he/she should be taken to the hospital to be evaluated by a doctor.

The athlete should not return to practice or conditioning until all symptoms have resolved and he/she has been cleared by a medical professional. Athletes who return to their sport, with symptoms of a concussion still present, are at a much greater risk of a second

concussion or second impact syndrome which can be a life threatening injury.