



POLICY 31

CONCUSSIONS

In compliance with Tennessee Code Annotated Section 68-55-503, TSSA has adopted guidelines and forms as developed by the Tennessee Department of Health to inform and educate coaches, young athletes, and their parents or guardians of the nature, risk and symptoms of concussion and head injury.

Every individual involved in youth athletics must become more proactive in identifying and treating athletes who show signs of concussion or head injury. In order to address this critical issue, the National Federation of State High School Associations includes the following language in 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 youth athletes who show signs of a concussion during athletic participation. It is very important that every administrator, coach, parent, official, athlete and health-care professional 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.

TSSA is asking every member team and club to adopt and comply with the terms set forth below in compliance with Tennessee law.

Required Club Documentation

Information concerning the nature, risk and symptoms of concussion and head injury should be reviewed by all administrators, coaches, youth athletes and their parent or guardian. Every individual involved in soccer at the sponsoring club or youth organization must review concussion information annually and sign a form that states this process has been completed as set forth below. The Tennessee Department of Health has concussion information available on its website at <http://health.state.tn.us/tbi/concussion.htm>. (See Signs/Symptoms of Concussion attached).

1. Prior to the annual initiation of practice or competition the following persons must review and sign a concussion and head injury information sheet: all coaches, administration, and any appointed licensed health care professional. (See Concussion Information and Signature Form for Coaches attached). This form is to be signed annually.
2. Prior to the annual initiation of practice or competition, all youth athletes and the athlete's parent or guardian should review a concussion and head injury information sheet. A form confirming this review (See Concussion Information and Signature Form for Athletes and Parents/Legal Guardians attached) shall be signed and returned by the youth athlete, if the athlete is 18 years of age or older; or, by the athlete's parent or guardian, for athletes younger than 18 years of age. This form is to be signed annually.
3. All documentation of the completion of a concussion recognition and head injury safety education course program and signed concussion and head injury information sheets shall be maintained by the athletic organization for a period of three years.

Required Coach Education Program

1. Every coach or assistant coach involved in soccer at the sponsoring club or youth organization must review concussion information annually and sign a form that states this process has been completed as set forth below.

2. All coaches and assistant coaches, whether employed or volunteer, shall annually complete the concussion recognition and head injury safety education course program approved by the Tennessee Department of Health. The concussion recognition and head injury safety education training programs are available on the Tennessee Department of Health website at <http://health.state.tn.us/tbi/concussion.htm> . The NFHS has developed a free 20-minute course online entitled “Concussion in Sports – What You Need to Know” which may be accessed at www.nfhslearn.com and has been recommended by the Department of Health.

Removal of Athlete from Participation

1. Any youth athlete who shows signs, symptoms and behavior consistent with a concussion shall immediately be removed from the activity or competition for evaluation by a licensed medical doctor, if available, and if not, by the coach or other designated person. (*See Tennessee Protocol for Response of Schools/ Community-Based Youth Athletic Organization Representatives*). In determining whether a youth athlete suffered from a possible concussion, the centers for disease control and prevention’s concussion signs and symptoms checklist shall be utilized. (*See CDC Concussion Signs and Symptoms Checklist attached*).

Return to Play for Athlete

1. No youth athlete who has been removed from play due to suspected concussion shall return to practice or competition until the youth athlete is evaluated by a health care provider and receives written clearance from the health care provider for a full or graduated return to play.¹ The attached Concussion Return to Play Form has been approved by TDH and should be used in practices and games. (*See Tennessee Concussion Return to Play Form attached*).The form contains specific instructions that shall be followed before an athlete can return to sports. The form is to be completed and signed by a licensed medical doctor, osteopathic physician 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 by the youth athletic organization administrator for a period of three years.

Game Day Protocol for USSF Officials During USSF Sanctioned Games & Tournaments

1. Determine prior to the start of the contest whether or not a coach/team/club/tournament 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 TSSA Policy 31.
4. Inform the head coach that the player is being removed for showing signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion.
5. The coach/manager/tournament shall have the player examined by their **designated health care provider**. If the **designated health care provider** determines that the player has not sustained a concussion, the head coach may so advise the officials during an appropriate stoppage of play and the player may re-enter competition pursuant to contest rules.
6. The head coach is in charge of seeking clearance from the **designated healthcare provider**.
7. If the coach/team/club/tournament does not have access to a **designated health care provider**, or if the coach/team/club/tournaments **designated health care provider** suspects that the player may have sustained a concussion, the only means for the player to return to practice or play is for the player 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 player, the “TSSA 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, the official will list specific details of the incident (player name, date, location, description) in the SOT report within 24 hours of the incident.

10. Officials have no role in the diagnosis of a concussion. TSSA Policy does 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, Physician’s Assistant, Doctor of Medicine, Osteopathic Physician

Game Day Protocol for Coaches, Teams, Clubs, and Tournaments

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 coach/team/club/tournament shall have the player examined by the team/club/tournament ***designated health care provider***. If the ***designated health care provider*** determines that the player 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 coach/team/club/tournament designated health care provider.

5. If the team does not have access to a **designated health care provider**, or if the team's **designated health care provider** suspects that the player may have sustained a concussion, the only means for a player to return to practice or play is for the player 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 "TSSA Concussion Return to Play" forms. Clubs and tournaments **MUST** keep this form on file for 3 years.

6. Officials have the ability to remove the player from play when they evaluate a player to exhibit the signs and symptoms of a concussion. If a player is removed from play and later has been evaluated and diagnosed by a licensed medical doctor (M.D.), Osteopathic Physician (D. O.) or a Clinical Neuropsychologist with concussion training; and the diagnosis is that the player does NOT have a concussion, the game may be protested to the Tennessee State League (TSL) Commission or Tournament Officials following TSSA policy. TSL Commission or Tournament Officials have the final say in protest decisions.

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

Concussion Forms and Checklists

[Concussion Signs and Symptoms](#)

[Concussion Form for Coaches](#)

[Concussion Form for Student Athletes and Parent/Legal Guardian](#)

[Tennessee Concussion Return to Play Form](#)