

## Gloucester City School District

### Concussion Policy

#### Head Injury, Concussion Identification, Management, and Return to Play

According to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, at least 3 million sports and recreation related concussions occur in the United States each year. A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury (TBI) caused by a direct or indirect blow to the head. The injury can range from mild-to-severe, and can disrupt the way the brain normally functions. A student-athlete does not need to lose consciousness to sustain a concussion. Some of the symptoms may appear right away while other symptoms can show up within hours, days or weeks after the injury.

Concussions are a serious and growing public health concern, especially for students participating in sports. The competitive athletic culture of playing through pain or “toughing it out” puts student-athletes at serious risk of brain injury, disability, and death. Allowing a student-athlete to return-to-play before recovering from a concussion increases the chance of a more serious brain injury that can result in severe disability and/or death.

The effects of concussion, while not all preventable, can be mitigated by prompt recognition and appropriate response. The Gloucester City School District, with guidance and strong encouragement from the NJSIAA, concludes that a viable public education program focused on concussion education, prevention, and a uniform return-to-play policy is in the best interest of student-athletes at the middle and high school level. Parents are also encouraged to visit [www.nfhsLearn.com](http://www.nfhsLearn.com) and take advantage of the free 20 minute video entitled: *Concussion in Sports: What You Need to Know* regarding the recognition and management of sports related concussion.

The Gloucester City School District shall ensure that coaches, athletic trainers, nurses and physicians employed by the school district show proof of satisfactory completion of training.

The Gloucester City School District will follow the Cantu Concussion Grading system and *Cantu Guidelines for Return to Play* after concussion along with the Zurich Return to Activity Progression in conjunction with NJSIAA recommendations.

A student-athlete who is suspected, in the best medical judgment of any certified athletic trainer, school nurse, or physician (M.D./D.O.), of having sustained a concussion or has lost consciousness (includes non concussion related syncope) during any practice or game shall be immediately removed from play and not return-to-play that day. The student athlete must meet the following criteria:

1. Immediate removal from play and not returning to play on that day. Any sustained loss of consciousness will result in the athlete being sent to the emergency room via a call to EMS for transfer.
2. Medical evaluation by physician or certified athletic trainer to determine the presence/absence of concussion.
3. It is mandatory that the student-athlete with a concussion be symptom free for **7 consecutive days before initiating a graduated return-to-play exercise protocol lasting no less than 5 days (as per NJSIAA policy)**. This results in a minimum 12 days lost from activity. The student-athlete must be monitored during this time period for any reoccurrence of concussion symptoms.
4. If the student-athlete exhibits a re-emergence of any post-concussion signs or symptoms once they begin the return-to-play progression, physical activity will be discontinued for a 24 hour rest period. Once asymptomatic, they will return to the previous level of activity that caused no symptoms and then advance as tolerated.
5. Utilization of available tools such as the Military Acute Concussion Evaluation (MACE), balance testing, symptom checklists, and computer based neuropsychological testing may be utilized.
6. If a student athlete is diagnosed with a concussion by an outside physician or emergency room from a non GCSD activity or accident, the same return to play guidelines apply.
7. In the event a student athlete presents a physician's note for return to play that does not comply with the GCSD concussion policy and return to play guidelines, then the Gloucester City School District physician will have final say in the return to play decision.

<sup>1</sup>Cantu, RC. Posttraumatic Retrograde and Anterograde Amnesia: Pathophysiology and Implications in Grading and Safe Return to Play. *Journal of Athletic Training*. 2001; 36(3): 244-248.

<sup>2</sup>McCrary et al. Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sport: The 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Concussion in Sport. *Journal of Athletic Training*, 2009: 44(4) : 434-448.