

Township of Mahwah Youth Sports Boosters

Concussion Protocol

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1. CONCUSSIONS – BASIC INFORMATION / EXPLANATION

A Concussion is a brain injury that can be caused by a blow to the head or body that interrupts the normal functioning of the brain. It can range from Mild to Severe and can cause symptoms ranging from mild to severe and in some cases, concussions can defy identification. One thing for certain is that a Concussion can cause significant and sustained neuropsychological impairment affecting problem solving, planning, memory attention, concentration and behavior.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 300,000 concussions are sustained during sports related activities nationwide and more than 62,000 concussions of these are sustained each year in high school contact sports. In cases when Second-impact syndrome occurs (a person sustains a second concussion while still experiencing symptoms of a previous concussion), it can lead to severe impairment and major injury. Unfortunately, many sports Concussions remain unreported despite (difficult to diagnose and the majority present minor symptoms) the efforts of most sports officials to better identify and deal with Concussions.

Fortunately, the numbers are significantly lower in the case of Recreational Sports Programs who cater to a generally younger population. To better deal with the issue of Concussion, TMYSB has begun a monitoring system – each sport documents and reports all Concussions. Based on data obtained to date, the program's incidence of Concussion has been quite minimal which is what is desired. This, however, in no way eliminates the need for necessary precautions that must be a part of any contact sport's program at any level.

The Township of Mahwah Youth Sports Boosters (TMYSB) is committed to creation of safe practice routines, better prevention and accurate identification of sports Concussions, and expanded review of treatment steps in the event of injury. It is only by

consistently following our Concussion Protocols can we ensure that our athletes remain safe and recover effectively should injuries of this type occur.

Because of all the serious consequences Concussion can cause, our organization has concentrated our efforts to protect the athletes by the following:

1. Better education of Coaches and all “on-field” sports personnel.
2. Distribution of Concussion Information to parents / athletes in an effort to make them more aware of the symptoms and treatment protocols.
3. Development of a written Policy (Protocol) describing the prevention and treatment of sports related concussion and related injuries.
4. Immediate removal from competition or practice, any athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion during the course of sports activities. The Athlete will be not allowed to return to competition or practice until he / she has written clearance from a physician trained in concussion treatment and has completed our organization’s graduated return-to-play protocol.

2. LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Sports related legislation was passed on December 7, 2010 (PL 2010, Chapter 94) which mandated measures to be taken in order to ensure the safety of K-12 student athletes involved in interscholastic sports in New Jersey. This legislation, as well as: N.J.S.A 18A: 40-41.3 both provide guidelines / requirements to be utilized by the Board of Educations in the operation of their sports programs.

Although “Youth Sport”, “Club Teams”, and other independent sports organizations are not legally required to adhere to the legislation as passed, it is the official position of the Township of Mahwah Youth Sports to operate our sports programs as closely as possible in accordance with the requirements presented as part of the Legislation. In “raising the bar” with regard to Concussion Prevention / Management, we do so in order to keep every athlete as safe as possible on the practice field and in competition.

3. TMYSB – CONCUSSION PROTOCOL

Education of Coaches – On field personnel: Training our Coaches is one of our highest priorities in fielding our sports teams. Right up there with Training is Safety and the procedures that will ensure our athletes remain safe at all times.

Training – All Coaches receive basic training via the Rutgers S.A.F.E.T.Y Course for Recreational Coaches. In addition, each sport presents a Pre-Season Coaching Session to:

Assign particular duties to each Coach, present the “game procedures (plays) for the season, rules changes, practice regime and other important information. During these sessions, Identification and Management of Concussion and related injuries is reviewed as well as the coach’s responsibilities with regard to the TMYSB Concussion Protocol. In addition, each Coach is required to pass the “Heads Up” Concussion Management course” in preparation for the season. Finally, the TMYSB Protocol and Procedures are reviewed by all coaches on a periodic basis.

In addition to all of the above, TMYSB is committed to utilization of Athletic Trainers at all major contact sports competitive events. These sports include: Football, Wrestling, and Lacrosse. These Trainers are a critical part of the Concussion Identification process on the field and during competitions to improve safety and to assist Coaches with adherence to Concussion Protocol Procedures.

TMYSB Concussion Protocol focuses on three major areas:

1. Safety Equipment and Proper Fit of equipment.

As a way to avoid injuries of this type, TMYSB is committed to providing the highest quality of safety equipment available to our programs. This equipment is carefully fitted in order to provide the maximum protection to each athlete. Our Equipment Managers are constantly researching new advancements with equipment such as Helmets, pads, etc. in order to order the most up to date equipment possible.

2. Training and Practice Procedures

Our Practice Procedures reflect “the best way to do it” mentality. In terms of the Contact Sports, the practice sessions / drills are run with as little head on contact and heavy collisions as possible and all drills have been evaluated from a standpoint of what they provide the players vs any risks to the utilization of the drill itself. We are constantly seeking new, improved and even safer ways to do drills that are appropriate to the sport and age group. Youth leagues are currently evaluating and always on the “lookout” for new rules and procedures that should further minimize risk of Concussion type injury.

Each player is taught the correct technique and all of these basics are reinforced via repetitive drills and Coach’s explanation. It is very important that correct technique is used at all times by the athletes as it is the best way to avoid injury.

3. Proper Identification and Management should these types of injuries occur during competition.

A. Identification

A key part of Identification is Observation and knowing each player. The Coaches must be aware of the Players performance in order to notice if there is any change in the player's on field performance – especially since any incident involving any sort of a hit to the head or upper body. Coaches and Athletic Trainers are responsible to “err on the side of being conservative”. **ANY** athlete who seems to be acting differently or shows **ANY** symptoms is to be removed from the field or event **IMMEDIATELY!** Once on the side line, the Coach, Athletic Trainer or Coaching staff will guide the player thru a series of questions and movements (based on the Graded Symptom Checklist) to assess the symptoms and determine if the player may have sustained a Concussion. As per our Concussion Protocol, if Concussion is even suspected, the Trainer or Coach is responsible for removing the athlete from the event and referring the athlete (based on the severity of the injury) for further follow up via Medical Personal (EMS, Physician, Neurologist, etc). At this point the Medical personal take over and handle any treatment until the athlete is cleared to return to active participation in the sport.

B. Concussion Protocol

Any player that player shows any of the symptoms of a Concussion, is withdrawn from competition and not allowed to return. If the symptoms appear serious (dizziness, headache, pain or tingling), the player is immobilized and EMTs are called to the field. If the symptoms are more minor, the player remains on the bench where the Trainer or one of the Coaches will monitor his / her condition and make them as comfortable as possible.

To monitor the player's condition after leaving the field, the parents will be given a copy of our Graded Symptom Checklist (GSC) and instructed to watch for evidence of the symptoms listed. The parents will also be instructed to have the athlete checked out by a Doctor (preferably a Neurologist or Concussion Specialist) in order to assess the athlete and the status of Concussion symptoms. From this point on, it is the Doctor's responsibility to recommend treatment and to clear the athlete to return to practice. An Injury Report will be completed and emailed to the Commissioner of the Sport as well as the VP, CAP.

Please note: No player who is removed from a game will return to practice or competition unless a Doctor's clearance letter is presented to the Head Coach. At that point, the Athlete enters a graduated step by step re-entry protocol that calls for limited activity at first leading to full activity when it judged to be safe for the Athlete to step back up to full activity.

C. Concussion Management – Any athlete who sustains multiple Concussions during a given season may be directed to a Neurologist for additional study as a precaution since subsequent Concussions can be dangerous in terms of causing more severe and chronic damage to the brain. Based on the Doctor’s recommendation, the Athlete may need to be removed from active competition or practice on a more permanent basis.

3. CHECKLIST / FORMS

Graded Symptom Checklist (GSC) – form that is utilized by the Coaching Staff to assess Concussion symptoms. It is also the checklist that is sent home with the parents in the event of a suspected Concussion so the parents can better monitor symptoms and provide more information to the Doctor who performs the follow up evaluation to determine if the Concussion symptoms remain and if it is safe for the athlete to resume normal activity.

Parent’s Concussion Information Sheet – this tool helps the parent to understand the Concussion Protocol and why it is done to protect the athletes. Provides guidelines which must be considered in assessing Concussions.

Valley Hospital Sports Institute:

Concussion Care Tips

Return to Play Progression

IMPACT Testing