Scott County Schools Head Concussion Policy

Introduction

Pursuant to subsection *A of § 22.1-271.5 of the Code of Virginia*, Scott County Schools have developed a policy dealing with the identification and proper handling of suspected head concussions in student-athletes. Our goal is to ensure that student-athletes are properly diagnosed, given adequate time to heal, and are comprehensively supported until they are symptom free.

Definitions

A **concussion** is a brain injury that is characterized by an onset of impairment of cognitive and/or physical functioning, and is caused by a blow to the head, face or neck, or a blow to the body that causes a sudden jarring of the head (i.e., a helmet to the head, being knocked to the ground). A concussion can occur with or without a loss of consciousness, and proper management is essential to the immediate safety and long-term future of the injured individual. A concussion can be difficult to diagnose, and failing to recognize the signs and symptoms in a timely fashion can have dire consequences.

Most athletes who experience a concussion can recover completely as long as they do not return to play prematurely. The effects of repeated concussions can be cumulative, and after a concussion, there is a period in which the brain is particularly vulnerable to further injury. If an athlete sustains a second concussion during this period, the risk of permanent brain injury increases significantly and the consequences of a seemingly mild second concussion can be very severe, and even result in death (i.e., "second impact syndrome").

Appropriate licensed health care provider means a physician, physician assistant, osteopath or athletic trainer licensed by the Virginia Board of Medicine; a neuropsychologist licensed by the Board of Psychology; or a nurse practitioner licensed by the Virginia State Board of Nursing.

Return to Play means participate in a nonmedically supervised practice or athletic competition.

Procedures

A. Participation in Athletic Activity

1. In order to participate in any extracurricular athletic activity, each student-athlete and the parent/guardian shall review, on an annual basis (every 12 months), information on concussions provided by Scott County School Division. After having reviewed materials, the student-athlete and parent/guardian shall sign a statement acknowledging receipt, review, and understanding of such information.

B. Suspected Head Concussion

1. A student-athlete suspected by that student's coach, athletic trainer, or team physician of sustaining a concussion or brain injury in a practice or game shall be removed from the activity at that time. A student-athlete who has been removed from play, evaluated, and suspected to have a concussion or brain injury shall not return to play that same day nor until (i) evaluated by an appropriate licensed health care provider as determined by the Board of Education and (ii) in receipt of written clearance to return to play from such licensed health care provider. The licensed health care provider evaluating student-athletes suspected of having a concussion or brain injury may be a volunteer.
2. Appropriate licensed health care providers or properly trained individuals evaluating student-athletes at the time of injury will utilize a standardized concussion sideline assessment instrument. **Sideline Concussion Assessment Tool (SCAT II), the Standardized Assessment of Concussion (SAC) and the Balance Error Scoring System (BESS)** are examples of sideline concussion assessment tools that test cognitive function and postural stability.

C. Protocol For Return To Play

1. No member of a school athletic team shall participate in any athletic event or practice the same day he or she is injured and:
   a. Exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors attributable to a concussion; or
   b. Has been diagnosed with a concussion.
2. No member of a school athletic team shall return to participate in an athletic event or training on the days after he/she experiences a concussion unless all of the following conditions have been met:
   a. The student no longer exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion, at rest or with exertion;
   b. The student is asymptomatic during, or following periods of supervised exercise that is gradually intensifying; and
   c. The student receives a written medical release from a licensed health care provider.

D. Helmet Replacement and Reconditions

1. Helmets must be National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE) certified by the manufacturer at the time of purchase.
2. Reconditioned helmets must be NOCSAE recertified by the reconditioner.

E. Signs and Symptoms of Concussions

1. Nausea (feeling that you might vomit)
2. Dizziness or balance problems
3. Double or fuzzy vision
4. Sensitivity to light or noise
5. Headache
6. Feeling sluggish or tired
7. Feeling foggy or groggy
8. Confusion
9. Trouble concentrating
10. Trouble remembering
11. Pupil changes (change in size or no reaction to light)