



Ohio's Return to Play Law: What Coaches & Referees Need to Know – *Interscholastic Athletics*

Training In Recognizing the Signs and Symptoms of a Concussion

COACHES: The Pupil Activity Permit (PAP) is necessary for all individuals who wish to direct, supervise or coach a program in the schools of Ohio involving athletics, routine or regular physical activity, or health and safety considerations, whether it is done on a paid or volunteer basis. PAPs are issued and regulated by the [Ohio Department of Education](#).

Those wishing to coach interscholastic athletics must hold a Pupil Activity Permit (PAP) issued by the [Ohio Department of Education](#). Coaches who already have a current PAP will be required to present evidence that they have successfully completed a training program in recognizing the symptoms of concussions and head injuries that is linked on the [Department of Health's website](#) **or** a training program authorized and required by an organization that regulates interscholastic conferences or events in order to renew their permit (permit renewals occurs every three-years [ORC 3319.303](#)).

Those who apply for a first-time Pupil Activity Permit, on or after April 19, 2013, to coach interscholastic athletics will be required to successfully complete a training program that is specifically focused on brain trauma and brain injury management training course approved by the department of health as part of the requirements to obtain a permit ([ORC 3319.303](#)).

REFEREES: Referees for interscholastic athletics must either:

- 1) hold a Pupil Activity Permit (see above) for coaching interscholastic athletics. Under the law ([ORC 3319.303](#)), individuals who possess a current permit will be required, as a condition of renewing their Pupil Activity Permit, to present evidence that the individual has successfully completed, within the previous three years, a training program in recognizing the symptoms of concussions and head injuries that is linked on the [Department of Health's website](#) or a training program authorized and required by an organization that regulates interscholastic conferences or events.

-OR-

- 2) successfully complete within the previous three years, an online training program in recognizing the symptoms of concussions and head injuries that is linked on the [Department of Health's website](#) or a training program authorized and required by an organization that regulates interscholastic conferences or events ([ORC 3707.511](#)).



Online Training

The current, free online trainings that have been approved by ODH to meet the training requirement for coaches and referees are listed on the **ODH Website, under Online Concussions Management Training** at: [Concussion Management Training](#).

PLEASE NOTE: All 3 courses offer a “certificate of completion” upon successful passage.

Removal from Play^{1 2}

Coaches, referees, or officials must remove an athlete if the athlete is exhibiting the signs and symptoms of a concussion during practice or a game. These include:

- Appears dazed or stunned.
- Is confused about assignment or position.
- Forgets instruction, is confused about an assignment or position, or unsure of the game, score or opponent.
- Moves clumsily.
- Answers questions slowly.
- Loses consciousness (*even briefly*).
- Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes.
- Can't recall events before or after a hit or fall.
- Headache or “pressure” in head.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Balance problems or dizziness, or double or blurry vision.
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy.
- Confusion, or concentration or memory problems.
- Just not “feeling right,” or “feeling down”.

Dangerous Signs & Symptoms of a Concussion¹

- One pupil larger than the other.
- Drowsiness or inability to wake up.
- A headache that gets worse and does not go away.
- Slurred speech, weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination.
- Repeated vomiting or nausea, convulsions or seizures (shaking or twitching).
- Unusual behavior, increased confusion, restlessness, or agitation.
- Loss of consciousness (passed out/knocked out). Even a brief loss of consciousness should be taken seriously.

The athlete cannot return to play on the same day that he or she is removed.

Medical Clearance to Return to Play²

Under Ohio law ([ORC 3313.539](#) and [ORC 3707.511](#)), a physician (in accordance with the Ohio Revised Code and Ohio Administrative Code) must provide **WRITTEN** clearance for an athlete to return to play.



A school district board of education or governing authority of a chartered or non-chartered nonpublic school may authorize a licensed health care professional to make an assessment or grant a clearance only if the professional is acting in accordance with the Ohio Revised Code and Ohio Administrative Code and with one of the following, as applicable to the professional's authority to practice in this state:

- In consultation with a physician.
- Pursuant to the referral of a physician.
- In collaboration with a physician.
- Under the supervision of a physician.

It is important to review your school's policy regarding what health care providers are authorized to clear an athlete to return to play.

Medical Review Clearance Forms

For school sports that are members of the Ohio High School Athletic Association, there is an OHSAA sanctioned form available at:

<https://ohsaa.org/Portals/0/Sports-Medicine/AuthorizationToReenter.pdf>

For youth sports organizations and schools that are not part of OHSAA, there is no specific form that must be filled out by a healthcare provider authorizing an athlete to return to play; however, the Ohio Department of Health has made one available at: [Return to Play-Medical Clearance Form.](#)

For More Information

¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - Head's Up in Youth Sports:

<https://www.cdc.gov/headsup/youthsports/>

²Consensus Statement Concussion in Sport:

[Consensus Statement Concussion in Sport](#)

Ohio Department of Health - Ohio's Return to Play Law:

<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/concussion>

Ohio Department of Education – Pupil Activity Permit:

<http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Teaching/Licensure/Audiences/Coaching-Permits>

Ohio's return to play law came into effect on April 19th, 2013

Coaches/Referees – Interscholastic Athletics – Rev 08/19/2024