



## Ohio's Return to Play Law – Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. When does the law come into effect?

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

### 2. What are the requirements for interscholastic (school-based) athletics?

Ohio's return to play law ([ORC 3313.539](#)) requires the following for interscholastic athletics:

- Prohibits a school from allowing a student to practice for or compete in interscholastic athletics until the student has submitted a signed form stating that the student's parent, guardian or other person having care or charge of the student has received a concussion and head injury information sheet created by the Department of Health.
- Requires a coach or referee to remove a student athlete exhibiting signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with having sustained a concussion or head injury from practice or competition.
- Prohibits an athlete to return to play on the same day as he/she was removed.
- Prohibits a coach or referee from allowing a student athlete to return to practice or competition from which the student was removed, or to participate in any other practice or competition for which the coach or referee is responsible, until the student has been assessed and cleared for return by a physician or by any other licensed health care provider authorized by the school and in accordance with the Ohio Revised Code and Ohio Administrative Code.
- Institutes training requirements for coaches and referees of interscholastic athletics (**see Questions 9 & 10**).



### **3. What are the requirements for youth sports organizations?**

Ohio's return to play law ([ORC 3707.511](#)) requires the following for youth sports organizations:

- Requires a youth sports organization to provide to the parent or other guardian of an individual who wishes to practice for or compete in an athletic activity organized by the organization, a concussion and head injury information sheet created by the Department of Health.
- Prohibits an individual from acting as a coach or referee for a youth sports organization without successfully completing a free online training program every three years in recognizing the symptoms of concussions posted to the [Ohio Department of Health's Website](#) **or** holding a pupil-activity program permit from the State Board of Education.
- The youth sport organization for which the individual intends to act as a coach or referee shall inform the individual of the training requirements.
- Requires a coach, referee, or official of a youth sports organization to remove an individual exhibiting signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with having sustained a concussion or head injury from practice or competition.<sup>2</sup>
- Prohibits a coach, referee, or official of a youth sports organization from allowing an individual to return to the practice or competition from which the individual was removed or to participate in any other practice or competition for which the coach, referee, or official is responsible until the individual has been assessed and cleared for return by a physician or by any other licensed health care provider authorized by the youth sports organization and in accordance with the Ohio Revised Code and Ohio Administrative Code.<sup>2</sup>
- Prohibits a coach, referee or official of a youth sports organization from allowing an individual to return to the play on the same day as he/she was removed.<sup>2</sup>



#### 4. Who can clear an athlete to return to play?<sup>2</sup>

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 or youth sports organizations' policy regarding what health care providers are authorized to clear an athlete to return to play.*

#### 5. Can a child return to play on the same day if he/she is cleared to return by a physician or other authorized health care provider?<sup>1 2</sup>

No. Ohio laws prohibit a child to return to play (practice or competition) on the same day that he/she is removed on suspicion of having sustained a concussion, regardless of whether he/she has been cleared by a physician or other authorized health care provider. He/she may return the following day if cleared **in writing** by a physician (MD or DO) or other authorized health care provider that they did not sustain a concussion. If they sustained a concussion, then they should complete the recommended [6-Step Return to Play Progression](#) before returning.

#### 6. How is a Youth Sports Organization defined under the law?

Under the law ([ORC 3707.51](#)), youth sports organizations are defined as public or nonpublic entities that organize athletic activities in which the athletes are not more than nineteen (19) years of age and are required to pay a fee to participate in the athletic activity or whose cost to participate is sponsored by a business or nonprofit organization.

#### 7. What schools must comply with Ohio's return to play law?

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

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The prohibitions and requirements for interscholastic athletics apply to public schools, including schools operated by school districts, community schools, and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) schools. They also apply to all private schools, including both chartered and non-chartered nonpublic schools ([ORC 3313.539](#), and [ORC 3326.27](#)).

**8. What are the training requirements for coaches and referees of youth sports organizations?**

Individuals who wish to coach or referee in a youth sports organization will be required to successfully complete, every three years, a [free online training program](#) in recognizing the symptoms of concussions and head injuries provided by the Ohio Department of Health if they do not hold a [Pupil Activity Permit](#) (see **Questions 11 & 12 for more information on Pupil Activity Permits**) from the Ohio Department of Education ([ORC 3707.511](#)).

**9. What are the training requirements for referees of interscholastic (school-based athletics)?**

Individuals who wish to referee interscholastic athletics must either:

- 1) Hold a [Pupil Activity Permit](#) (see **Questions 11 & 12**) for coaching interscholastic athletics

**-OR-**

- 2) Successfully complete an online training program, every 3 years, in recognizing the symptoms of concussions and head injuries that is linked on the [Department of Health's web site](#) or a training program authorized and required by an organization that regulates interscholastic conferences or events. ([ORC 3707.511](#))

**10. What are the training requirements for coaches of interscholastic (school-based) athletics?**

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 to coach interscholastic athletics will be required to successfully complete a training program that is specifically focused on brain trauma and brain injury management and the sudden cardiac arrest training course approved by the department of health. as part of the application requirements ([ORC 3319.303](#)).



### **11. What is a Pupil Activity Permit?**

Ohio Revised Code section [3319.303](#) of the Revised Code requires the State Board of Education to adopt rules establishing standards and requirements for obtaining a [Pupil Activity Permit](#). The Pupil Activity Permit 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. For more information on the Pupil Activity Permits, please visit the [Ohio Department of Education's web site](#).

### **12. I have a Pupil Activity Permit. Do I need to take the online concussion training?**

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.

Those who apply for a first-time Pupil Activity Permit to coach interscholastic athletics will be required to successfully complete a training program that is specifically focused on brain trauma and brain injury management as part of their requirements ([ORC 3319.303](#)).

### **13. Where can I download the concussion information sheet?**

The forms can be accessed by using the links below or visiting:  
<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/concussion>

#### **[Student Athlete Concussion Information Sheet](#) (for Interscholastic Activities) –**

Starting April 19, 2013, Ohio laws prohibits schools from allowing a student to practice for or compete in interscholastic athletics until the student has submitted this signed form stating that the student and the student's parent or guardian have received the information contained in the sheet.

#### **[Youth Sports Organization Concussion Information Sheet](#) (for Youth Sports Organizations) –**

Starting April 19, 2013, Ohio law requires a youth sports organization to provide this sheet to the parent or other guardian of an individual who wishes to practice for or compete in an athletic activity organized by the organization.



**14. What are the approved online training courses?**

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: [Online Concussion Management Training](#)

**15. How often are student athletes (interscholastic athletics) required to submit the signed Concussion Information Sheet?**

Students are required to submit a completed form each school year for each sport or other category of interscholastic athletics for which the student practices or competes ([ORC 3313.539](#)).

**16. If a student submits the signed concussion information sheet for an activity in the fall and would like to participate in another interscholastic athletic activity during the same school year, does he or she have to turn in another concussion information sheet?**

Yes. Student athletes are required to submit the form for each sport or other category of interscholastic athletics for which the student practices or competes ([ORC 3313.539](#)).

**17. How often are youth sports organizations required to provide the ODH Concussion Information Sheet?**

Youth sports organizations are required to provide the information sheet annually for each sport or other category of athletic activity ([ORC 3707.511](#)).

**18. What if a coach or referee thinks a player should be removed from practice or game after a head injury, but the player's parent/guardian disagrees and thinks the player should continue playing – who makes the final decision?**

Ideally, parents who have received and reviewed the ODH concussion information sheet will recognize the signs and symptoms of a possible concussion. However, coaches, referees (and officials in the case of youth sports organizations) are responsible for removing an athlete from play if he or she shows the signs and symptoms of a concussion– even if a parent or the player disagrees ([ORC 3313.539](#) and [ORC 3707.511](#)). The athlete is not permitted to return to play on the same day as he/she is removed.

**19. What are the signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with having sustained a concussion or head injury?<sup>1</sup>**

Signs and symptoms generally show up soon after the injury. However, you may not know how serious the injury is at first and some symptoms may not show up for hours or days. For example, in the first few minutes your child or teen might have a headache or feel confused or a bit dazed. But a few days later, your child might have more trouble sleeping or changes in mood than usual.



You should continue to check for signs of concussion right after the injury and a few days after the injury. If your child or teen's concussion signs or symptoms get worse be sure to share this information with their healthcare provider.

### **Signs Observed by Parents or Guardians:<sup>1</sup>**

- Appears dazed or stunned.
- Is confused about assignment or position.
- Forgets an instruction, is confused about an assignment or position, or is 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 hit or fall.

### **Symptoms Reported by Athlete:<sup>1</sup>**

- Headache or "pressure" in head.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Balance problems or dizziness, or double or blurry vision.
- Bothered by light or noise. Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy.
- Confusion, or concentration or memory problems.
- Just not "feeling right," or "feeling down".

In rare cases, a dangerous collection of blood (hematoma) may form on the brain after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body that may squeeze the brain against the skull. Call 9-1-1 right away or take your child or teen to the emergency department if he or she has one or more of the following danger signs after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body.

### **Dangerous Signs & Symptoms of a Concussion<sup>1</sup>**

- 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.



**20. Are there resources available for health care providers on clearing an athlete to return to play?**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have a number of resources to assist health care providers in helping to identify, diagnose and manage concussions. These resources can be accessed here: [CDC Heads Up](#)

**21. Are there any resources available for parents, coaches, teachers, and school administrators to help students return to school after sustaining a concussion?**

Nationwide Children's Hospital offers a number of resources to educate parents, coaches, teachers, and school administrators about the signs, symptoms, treatments and management of concussion. These material can be found at: [www.Nationwidechildrens.org/concussion-toolkit](http://www.Nationwidechildrens.org/concussion-toolkit)

**22. Does the law apply to out of state coaches and referees?**

If an individual from out-of-state is a coach or referee for an Ohio youth sports organization in Ohio, then that individual must comply with the Ohio law. If an out-of-state coach or referee took one of the three [ODH identified training courses](#) to meet the requirements in their own state within the past three years, then they do not have to re-take the training. If they took another course that has not been approved to ODH, then they would have to take one of two identified trainings to ensure compliance with the law.

**23. What do youth sports organizations have to do to comply with the training requirements under the law?**

The youth sports organization for which the individual intends to act as a coach or referee shall inform the individual of the requirement described in Ohio law.

**24. If my youth sports organization is part of a larger youth sports organizations, who is responsible for providing the concussion information sheet to parents/guardians?**

Whichever organizational unit or entity has direct contact with the athlete is the most reasonable appropriate entity to distribute the concussion information sheet. Several organizations are incorporating the sheet into their registration procedures.

**25. Is there a form that health care providers must sign to permit an athlete to return to practice or play after they are removed?**

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,

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the Ohio Department of Health has made one available at: [Return to Play-Medical Clearance Form](#). The law only requires that the athlete must present evidence in writing by a physician (MD or DO), an individual in accordance with the Ohio Revised Code and the Ohio Administrative Code.

**Disclaimer:** *This document is intended to serve as guidance for Ohio's Return to Play Law and should not be construed as legal advice or legal opinion on specific facts or circumstances. You should consult an attorney with respect to any particular issue or concern.*

## Resources

### <sup>1</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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

### <sup>2</sup>Consensus Statement Concussion in Sport

[Consensus Statement Concussion in Sport](#)

### ODH Violence and Injury Prevention Section

<https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/child-injury-Prevention/vipp>

### Nationwide Children's Hospital

[www.Nationwidechildrens.org/concussion-toolkit](http://www.Nationwidechildrens.org/concussion-toolkit)

### Ohio Department of Health

*Violence and Injury Prevention Section*

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