



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Commission on Youth

Student-Athlete Concussions

October 20, 2015

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Background



2010 General Assembly Session

SB 652 (Northam) required the Board of Education to develop and distribute to local school divisions by July 1, 2011, guidelines for policies dealing with concussions in student-athletes. The bill also required each local school division to develop policies and procedures:

- To inform and educate coaches, student-athletes and their parents or guardians on the risks, and short- and long-term health effects of concussions, criteria for removal from and return to play, and the risks for not reporting the injury and continuing to play; and
- For the identification and handling of suspected concussions in student-athletes allowing for adequate time to heal, and providing comprehensive support until the student-athlete is symptom free.

Background



Virginia Department of Education Activities

The Department of Education worked with numerous stakeholder groups in the development of the guidelines including:

- The Virginia High School League, the Virginia Department of Health, the Virginia Athletic Trainers Association, Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters, Children's National Medical Center, the Brain Injury Association of Virginia, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Virginia College of Emergency Physicians, and other interested stakeholders.

The Board of Education

- November 18, 2010 accepted first review of the proposed guidelines
- November 19, 2010 requested public comments
- January 13, 2011 adopted the proposed guidelines

Background



2014 General Assembly Session

HB 410 (Anderson) and SB 172 (Stuart) – Requires each non-interscholastic youth sports program utilizing public school property to:

- establish policies and procedures regarding the identification and handling of suspected concussions in student-athletes, consistent with either the local school division's policies and procedures or Board of Education's *Guidelines for Policies on Concussions in Student-Athletes*; or
- follow the local school division's policies and procedures regarding the identification and handling of suspected concussions in student-athletes.

Added information on the effects of concussions on academic performance to the Board of Education's *Guidelines for Policies on Concussions in Student-Athletes*.

Background



2014 General Assembly Session

HB 1096 (Filler-Corn) – Requires the Board of Education to amend its guidelines for school division policies and procedures on concussions in student-athletes to include a "Return to Learn Protocol" with requirements that school personnel:

- be alert to cognitive and academic issues that may be experienced by a student-athlete who has suffered a concussion or other head injury; and
- accommodate the gradual return to full participation in academic activities by a student-athlete who has suffered a concussion or other head injury.

Background



Virginia Department of Education Activities

Superintendent's Memo #036-15

- February 20, 2015 – Revisions to the Board of Education's *Guidelines for Policies on Concussions in Student-Athletes*, House Bills 410 and 1096 and Senate Bill 172, of the 2014 General Assembly.

2015 General Assembly Session

Legislation introduced but failed to pass

- HB 2006 (Torian) and SB 998 (Stuart) – Requires each local school division to establish a management plan for implementation of and compliance with its policies and procedures regarding the identification and handling of suspected concussions in student-athletes. These bills were sent to the Commission on Youth for further study.

Background



Commission on Youth Activities

- Review Virginia laws, policies and procedures
- Interview key staff of the Virginia Department of Education and stakeholders
- Analyze local practices
 - Conduct a survey of school superintendents
- Analyze other states' practices and procedures
 - National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)
- Convene a round table of stakeholders

Background



Round Table – September 22, 2015 Participants

- American Academy of Pediatrics – Virginia Chapter
- Brain Injury Association of Virginia
- Brain Injury and Sports Concussion Institute
- Children’s Hospitals
- Children’s National Medical Center
- Local Recreation Clubs
- Medical Society of Virginia
- Members of the Commission on Youth/General Assembly
- Neuropsychologists
- Parents
- Universities
- Virginia Academy of Family Physicians
- Virginia Academy of School Psychologists
- Virginia Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
- Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals
- Virginia Association of School Superintendents
- Virginia Association of School Nurses
- Virginia Athletic Trainers' Association
- Virginia College Emergency Physicians
- Virginia Counselors Associations
- Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
- Virginia Department of Education
- Virginia Department of Health
- Virginia High School Coaches Association
- Virginia High School League
- Virginia Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association
- Virginia School Board Association
- Virginia Physical Therapy Association
- Virginia Medical Society for Sports Medicine
- Virginia Recreation and Park Society

Survey Results



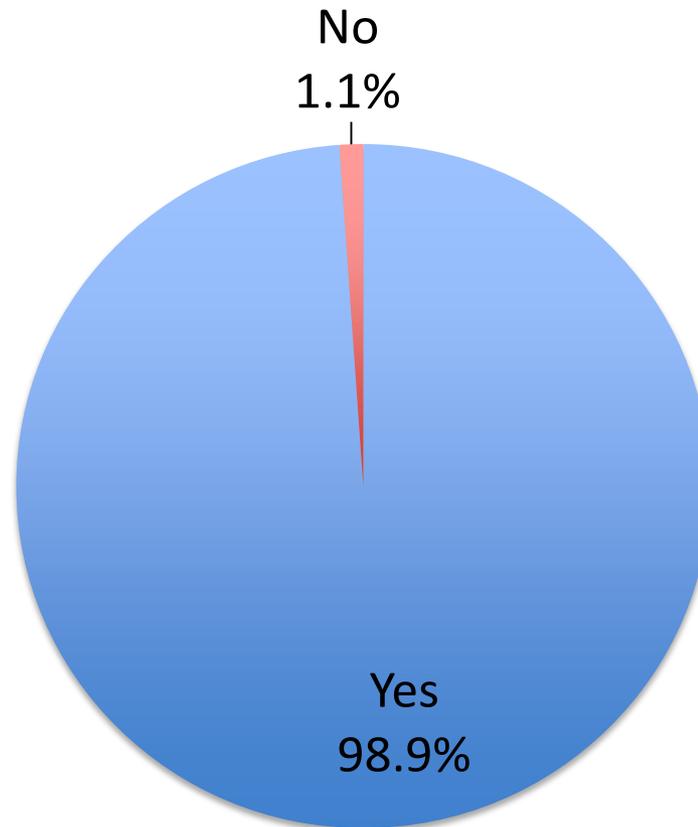
Superintendent's Memo #203-15

- School divisions were asked to provide the Commission with information on:
 - School divisions' policies/procedures on the identification and handling of suspected concussions in student-athletes;
 - How each school division's concussion policies are provided to student-athletes' parents/guardians, as well as the methods used for collecting information from parents/guardians acknowledging receipt, review, and understandings of these policies;
 - The methods utilized by school divisions to ensure compliance with the divisions' concussion policies; and
 - School division's representative responsible for overseeing student-athlete concussion policies and their contact information.
- Received 73 responses
- 20 additional policies were added through internet searches.

Survey Results



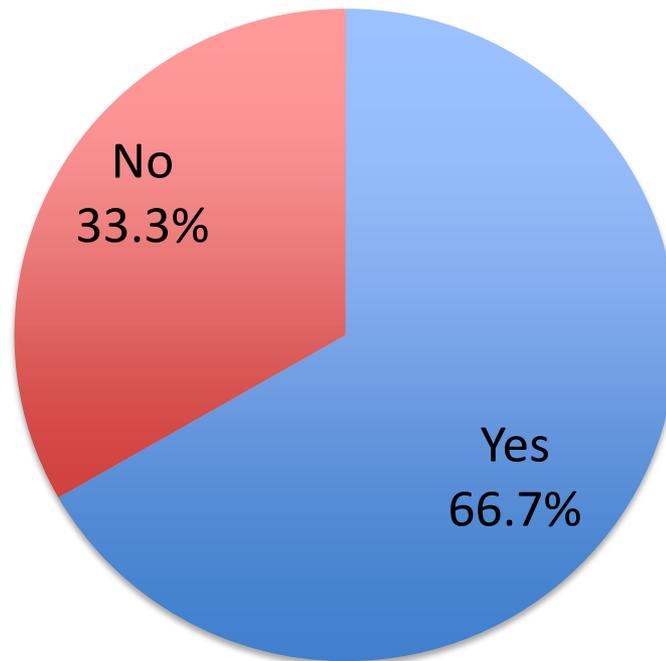
Does the school division have a policy on identifying and handling concussions among student-athletes?



Survey Results



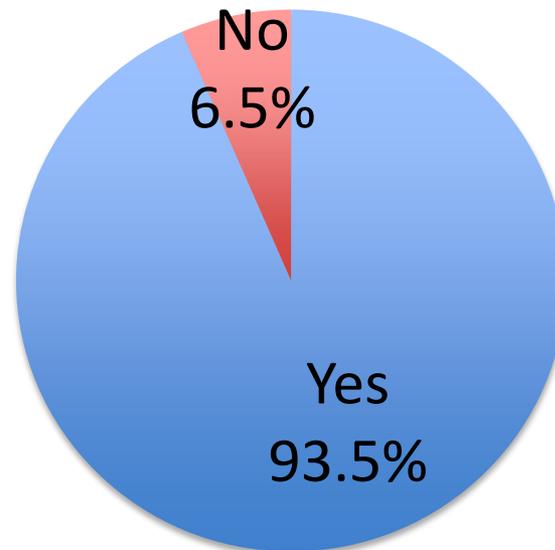
Does the school division's concussion policy have a Return to Learn protocol?



Survey Results



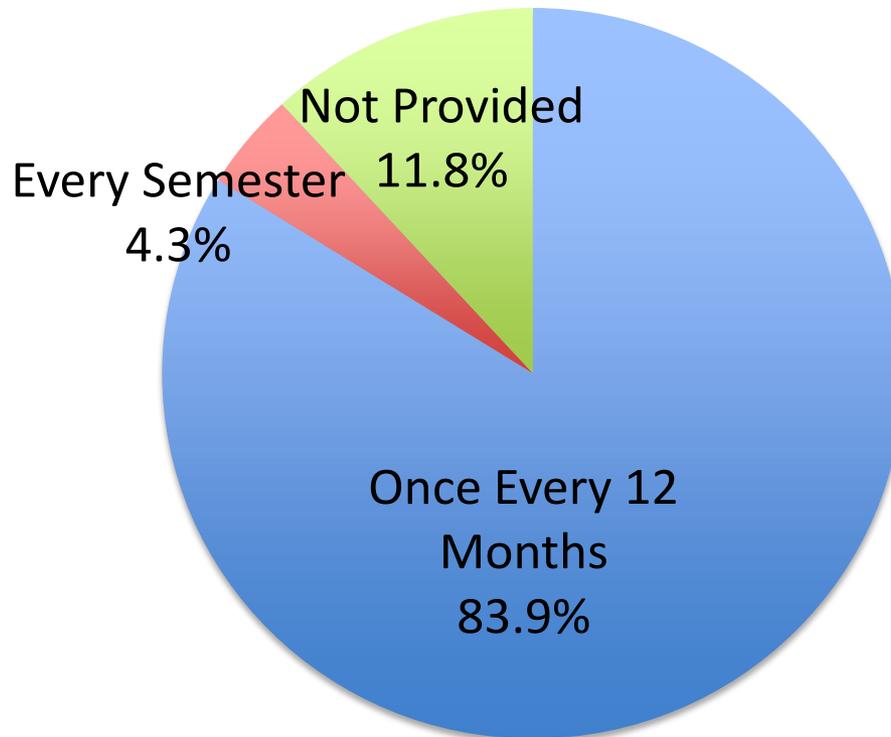
Does the school division's policy require parents/guardians review the information on concussions provided by the school division and provide a signature of acknowledgement, in order for a student- athlete to participate in any extracurricular activity?



Survey Results



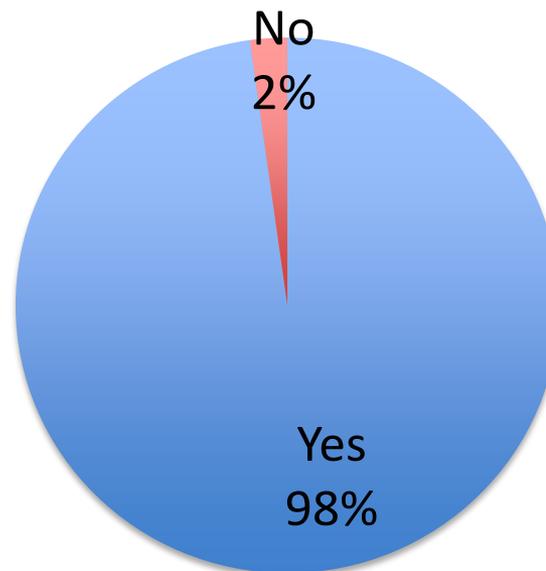
How often does the parental/guardian review of concussion-related information occur?



Survey Results



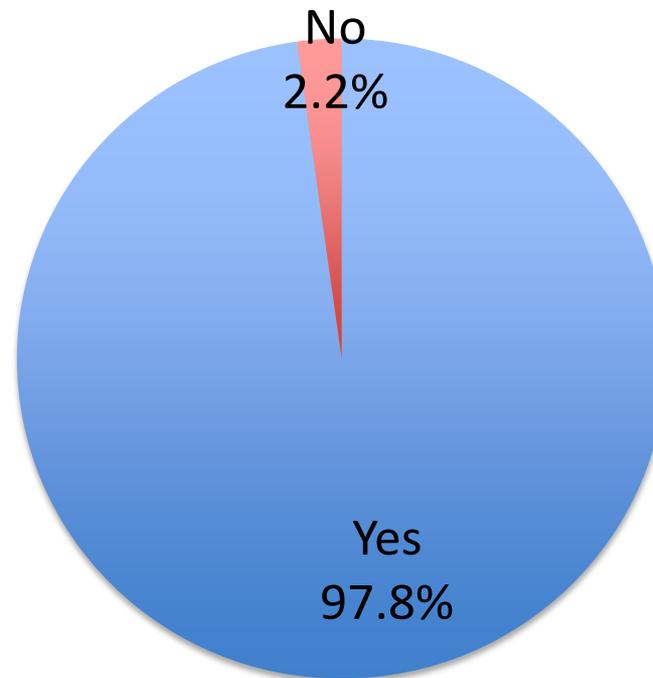
Does the school division's policy require student-athletes who have been suspected of sustaining a concussion during a game or practice be removed from the activity immediately?



Survey Results



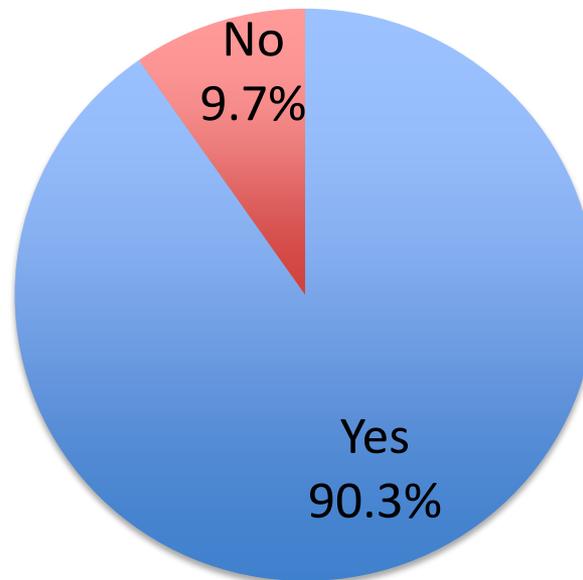
Does the school division's policy require that the injured student-athlete be evaluated and cleared by a licensed health care provider before re-entry?



Survey Results



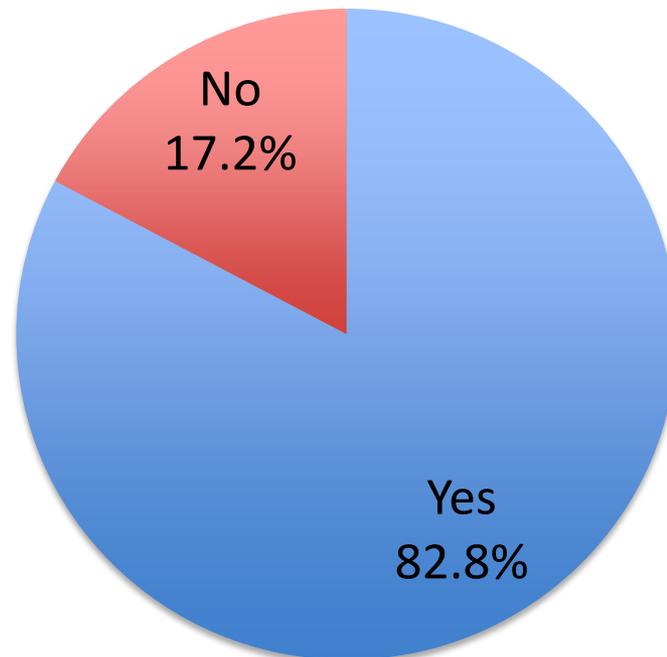
Does the school divisions' policy require the licensed health care provider to evaluate student-athletes at the time of injury using a Standardized Concussion Sideline Assessment (SCAT) instrument?



Survey Results



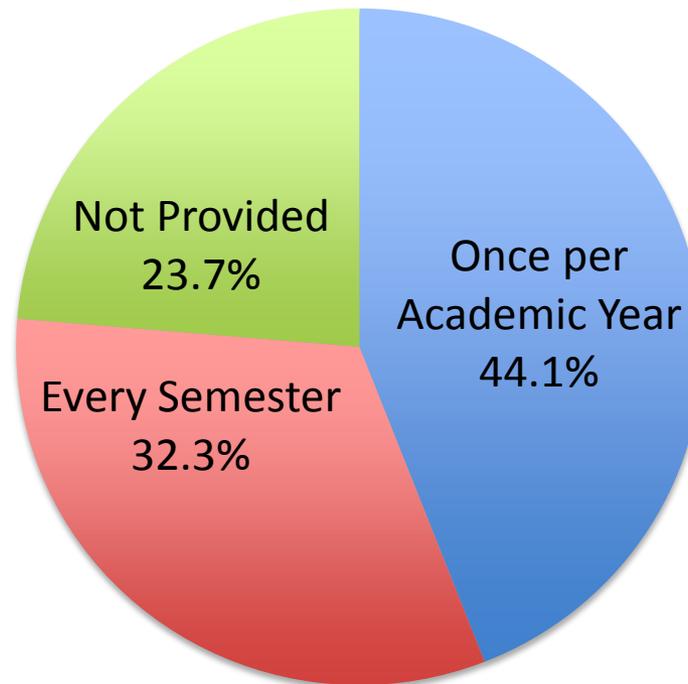
Does the school division's policy establish a Concussion Management Team?



Survey Results



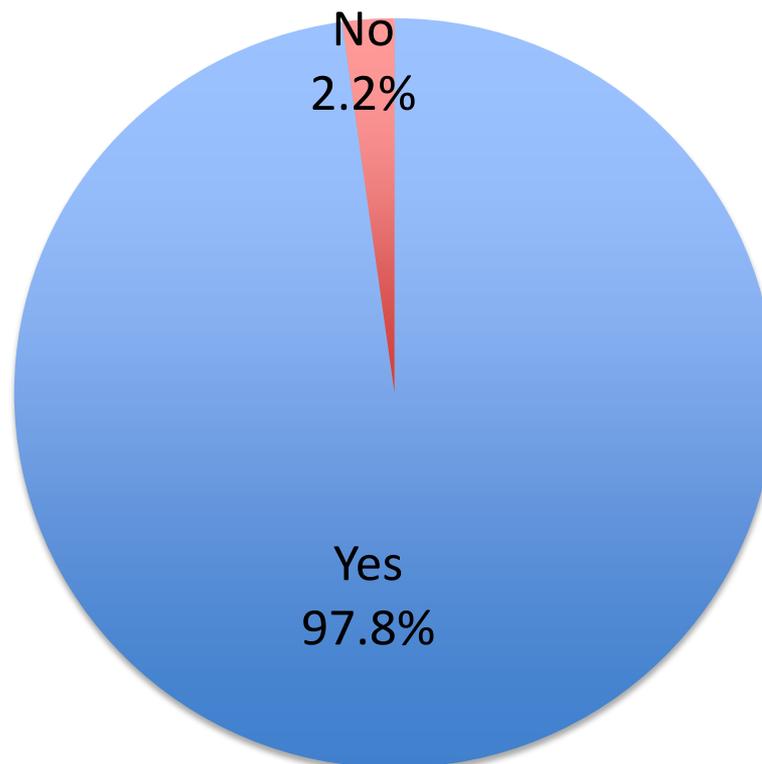
How often does the Concussion Management Team review the Concussion Policy?



Survey Results



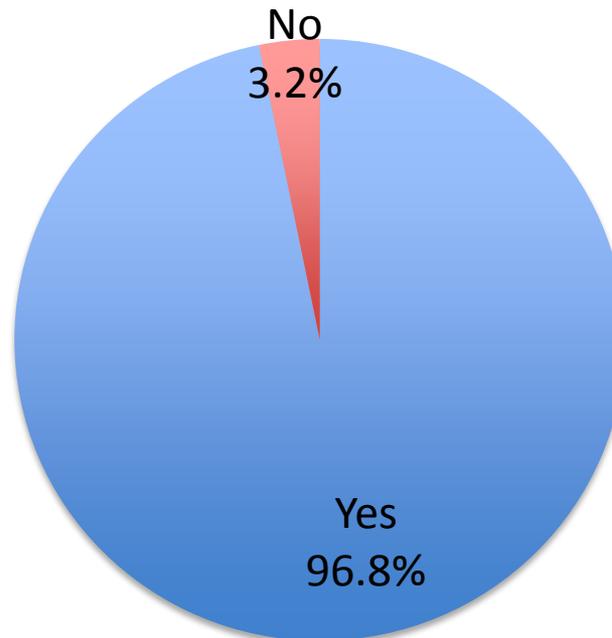
Does the school division have a Return to Play protocol?



Survey Results



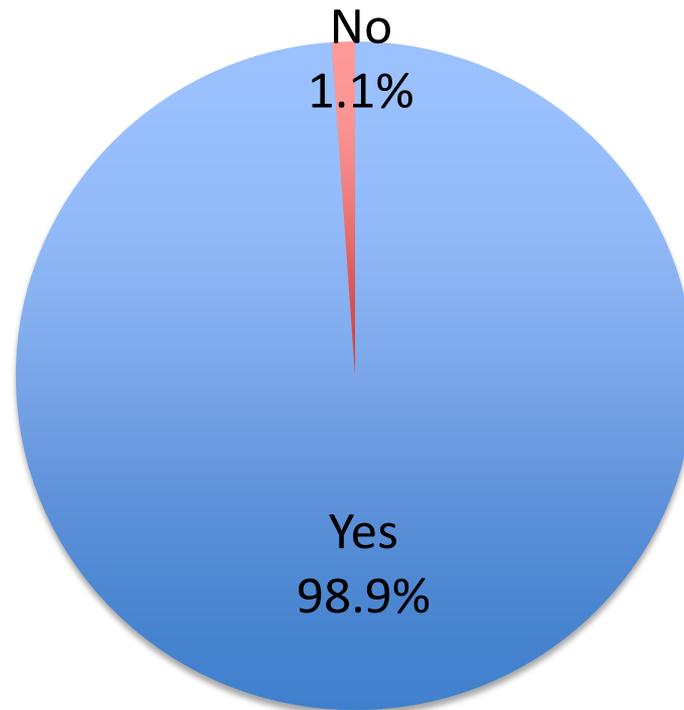
Does the school division's Return to Play protocol restrict participation in any athletic activity or practice the same day of injury, if student-athletes possess signs, symptoms, or behaviors attributed to a concussion; or diagnosis of a concussion?



Survey Results



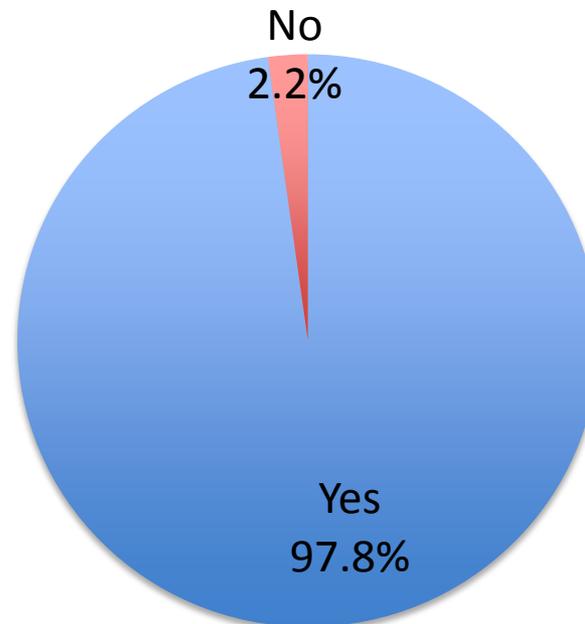
Does the school division's Return to Play policy restrict student-athletes from participating in any athletic activity or practice the days following a concussion injury?



Survey Results



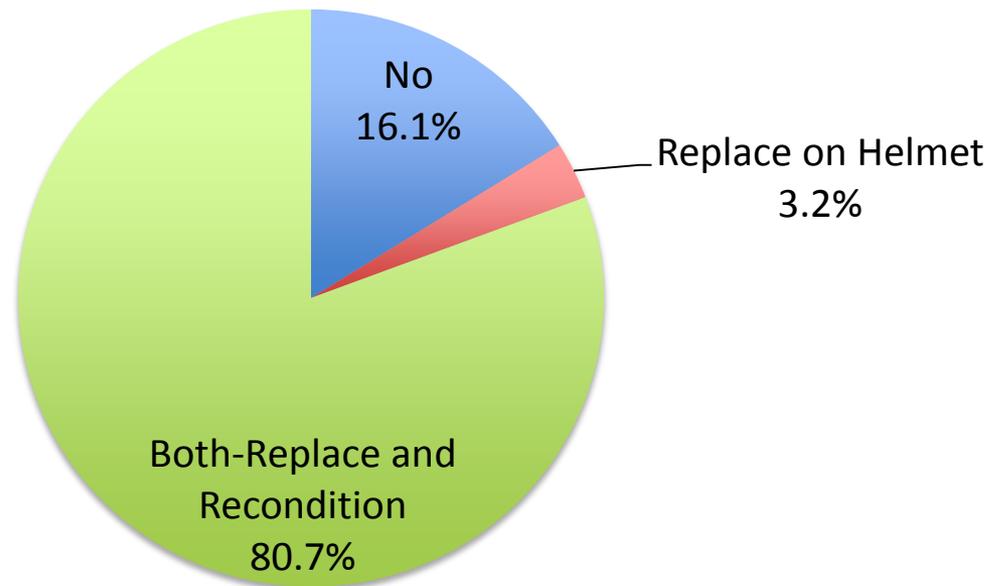
Does the school division's Return to Play policy restrict participation in athletic activity or practice until a medical release is obtained **and** the student-athlete exhibits no signs of a concussion?



Survey Results



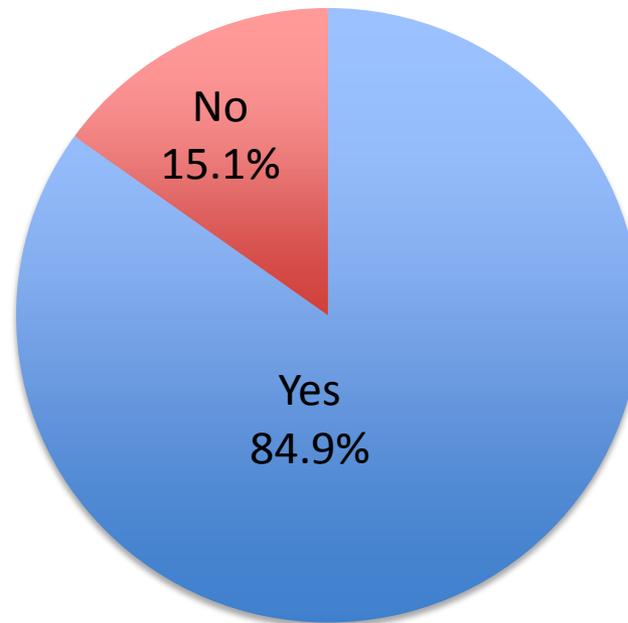
Does the school division have policies requiring that replaced **and** reconditioned helmets be certified by the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment?



Survey Results



Does the school division have a policy requiring that the Concussion Management Team's annual trainings are current?



Round Table Recommendations



Public Awareness

- There is a need to provide more education to parents regarding concussions.
- There is a need for better communication with low income families.
- There is also a need for better communication from the families to the schools.
- Include concussion education at all levels of school as part of the wellness message in the health curriculum.
- Encourage the Virginia Department of Health to provide public service messages on concussion awareness around the state through the media (must be targeted and culturally responsive) including concussion literature, posters, etc.
- Request the Virginia Department of Health to provide regional information session on concussion guidelines and awareness.
- Encourage use of technology/smart phone applications for concussions.

Round Table Recommendations



Return to Learn

- Mandate return to learn.
- Identify outcomes for return to learn as a means of tracking progress (tie academic, behavioral, and injury data).
- Develop more guidance for return to learn which includes practical strategies for teachers to implement on their level.
- Develop communication forms that schools could use with families and the medical community.
- Establish minimum standards for return to learn. Look to medical community and universities for their expertise. Return to learn needs to address the school perspective.
- Schools divisions need to identify the authority/person who determines whether a student is ready to return to play or return to learn.
- Ensure case management procedures in place for return to learn.
- Provide teachers with professional development about return to learn.

Round Table Recommendations



Communication

- Need for better communication between the health care community and the schools. Investigate using a parental consent agreement and include this in the VDOE Guidelines.
- Current education on concussion training may be redundant. Resources may need to be expanded. Also, there is a need for active education to engage all stakeholders on how to respond to concussions.
- There is a need to involve the community and reach out to different groups.
- Improve communication between medical community and schools. The Prince William model serves as a good example on how this communication could work.

Round Table Recommendations



Data

- Establish a data system where information can be shared on concussions (Elementary, Middle and High School).
- Develop a statewide tracking system to see how many concussions and how long it takes for the student to return to learn. Request the Virginia High School League Executive Committee to look at the feasibility of the development of such a tracking system.
- Look at the NCAA High School Reporting Information Online (RIO) system as a possible means of data collection. Reporting to this system is currently fueled by certified athletic trainers (ATC).
- How do we evaluate if school concussion programs are working if statewide numbers remain unknown? Who has capacity and ability to interpret and use the data?

Round Table Recommendations



Legislative

- Amend the *Code of Virginia* to include all students, not just student-athletes.
- Enforce the current language in the *Code of Virginia* regarding student-athlete concussions.
- Amend the *Code of Virginia* to include a date for schools to have a return to learn policy in place.

Best Practices

- Encourage ongoing equipment checks (fitting and use).
- Develop a resource for schools to use in seeing what other school divisions are doing with their policies on student-athlete concussions. Help connect schools that do it well with schools that are having difficulty either developing policies or implementing them.

Round Table Recommendations



Funding

- Provide special funding for low density/low poverty areas, (i.e. Southwest Virginia) for additional supports in dealing with concussions. Look at Perkins funding to help train certified athletic trainers (ATC).
- Provide funding through the Standards of Quality (SOQ) for an athletic trainer in every school division.
- Provide funding through the SOQ for a school nurse in every school division.
- Provide funding for an independent assessment on how school divisions are doing with their student-athlete concussion policies.
- Recognize that there is a lack of resources across the Commonwealth.

Round Table Recommendations



Eligibility

- Require a Pre-Participation Physical Examination (PRE) for Middle School sports.
- Look into pre-participation concussion training requirements similar to Prince William County for athletes in middle school.

Training

- Mandate coaches training in concussion awareness. Should Virginia consider disciplinary action for coaches who do not follow the protocol?

Virginia High School League

- Recognize the value of Virginia High School League; they provide the “hammer” for enforcing the Guidelines.

Round Table Recommendations



Youth Leagues

- Develop a youth league report card to see if they are meeting safety standards. Need to encourage better communication with the schools.
- Investigate how to require recreation sports teams to have concussion policies that do not play on school property

Private Schools

- What can be done to encourage private schools into adopting concussion policies?

Insurance

- Look into providing incentives for youth leagues that have safety standards.



Public Awareness

Recommendation 1

Request the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to assess the feasibility of conducting regional information training sessions on updated concussion guidelines and concussion awareness. VDH previously conducted these trainings after the adoption of the 2011 *Guidelines for Policies on Concussions in Student-Athletes*.

The Departments are encouraged to use materials from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as a guideline for presenting information to communities. Information presented should focus on identification of concussions, the use of smart phone applications, short-term and long-term health effects of concussions, and safety precautions.

Draft Recommendations



Return to Learn

Recommendation 2

Request VDOE develop additional guidance for the return to learn protocols to be included in the Board of Education's *Guidelines for Policies on Concussions in Student-Athletes*. Guidance should include case management procedures for return to learn, minimum standards for return to learn, and practical strategies for teachers to implement in the classroom. In addition, the *Guidelines* should include template communication consent forms that school divisions may use to help assist with the sharing of information between schools, families, and the medical community. School divisions should be encouraged to identify a person within school/school division to ensure that the return to learn protocol is being followed.

Draft Recommendations



Return to Learn (cont.)

Recommendation 3

Request the Executive Committee of the Virginia High School League (VHSL) consider requiring that a school division must have a return to learn protocol in place in order to participate in the VHSL.

Draft Recommendations



Data

Recommendation 4

Request the Executive Committee of the VHSL to examine the feasibility of developing a statewide database/tracking system on student-athlete concussions in Virginia. Considerations for the database should include the ability to capture data on how long it takes for the student to return to play/return to learn; how to make such a system effective in using the data to increase positive outcomes; how data may be used to determine if current school concussion policies/programs are effective; and if the NCAA High School Reporting Information Online (RIO) System could be expanded to serve as Virginia's database.

Draft Recommendations



Legislative

Recommendation 5

Amend § 22.1-271.6 of the *Code of Virginia* to require local school divisions develop policies and procedures regarding "Return to Learn Protocol" by July 1, 2016, consistent with either the local school division's policies and procedures or the Board of Education's *Guidelines for Policies on Concussions in Student-Athletes*.

Recommendation 6

Amend § 22.1-271.6 of the *Code of Virginia* to change the group covered by the statute from student-athlete to student.

Draft Recommendations



Best Practices

Recommendation 7

Request VDOE provide best practices resources for school divisions to use in seeing what other school divisions are doing with their policies on student-athlete concussions. Such resources shall help connect schools that do it well with schools that are having difficulty either developing policies or implementing them.

Draft Recommendations



Funding

Recommendation 8

Introduce a budget amendment to provide funding for low population density/poverty areas for additional supports in assisting students with concussions to return to the classroom successfully. Funding may be used for a licensed school nurse position employed by the school division, a licensed nurse contracted by the local school division, or a certified athletic trainer. Funding shall be used to support the return to learn protocol as defined by the Board of Education's *Guidelines for Policies on Concussions in Student-Athletes*.

Recommendation 9

Introduce a budget amendment to provide funding through the Standards of Quality (SOQ) for a certified athletic trainer in every school division.

Recommendation 10

Introduce a budget amendment to provide funding through SOQ for a school nurse in every school division.

Draft Recommendations



Funding (cont.)

Recommendation 11

Option 1: Introduce a budget amendment for an independent assessment conducted by an institution of higher education of local school divisions' policies on concussion in student-athletes.

Option 2: Request VDOE to contact school divisions identified by the Virginia Commission on Youth's study survey as either not having a policy regarding the identification and handling of suspected concussions in student-athletes or that have missing components, such as annual parental review of the division's concussion policies. VDOE will work with these school divisions to provide technical assistance and resources so that these divisions expeditiously adopt policies that fulfill the requirements set forth in the Board of Education's *Guidelines for Policies on Concussions in Student-Athletes*.

Draft Recommendations



Eligibility

Recommendation 12

Request the Executive Committee of the Virginia High School League to require a Pre-Participation Physical Examination (PRE) for athletes participating in middle school sports.

Draft Recommendations



Youth Leagues

Recommendation 13

Request the Virginia Recreational Sports Association, the Virginia Youth Football and Cheering League, and the Virginia Youth Soccer Association to investigate ways to encourage concussion education, including: providing strategies in concussion prevention, the development of a youth league report card for meeting safety standards for their members; and the establishment of policies and procedures regarding the identification and handling of suspected concussions in student-athletes, consistent with either local school division's policies and procedures or the Board of Education's *Guidelines for Policies on Concussions in Student-Athletes*.

Draft Recommendations



Private Schools

Recommendation 14

Request the Virginia Association of Independent Schools to investigate ways to encourage concussion education, to provide strategies in concussion prevention, and to establish policies and procedures regarding the identification and handling of suspected concussions in student-athletes, consistent with either the local school division's policies and procedures or the Board of Education's *Guidelines for Policies on Concussions in Student-Athletes*.



Questions/Comments?

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