

Student-Athlete Concussions

Draft Recommendations for Public Comment

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.

Return to Learn

Recommendation 2

Request the Virginia Department of Education to 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.

Recommendation 3

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

Data

Recommendation 4

Request the Executive Committee of the Virginia High School League 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.

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'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.

Best Practices

Recommendation 7

Request the Virginia Department of Education to 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.

Funding

Recommendation 8

Option 1: 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*.

Option 2: Provide funding through the Department of Education to assist students with concussions to return to the classroom successfully. The purpose of this budget amendment is to provide the necessary supports to schools for students with concussions who may not have those services available within the school setting. The funding may be used to contract with licensed medical professionals to assist the local school with the return to learn protocol as defined by the Board of Education's *Guidelines for Policies on Concussion 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.

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 contact school divisions identified by the Virginia Commission on Youth 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*.

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.

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*.

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*.