



CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT



Athletic Directors, coaches and officials in our state have all been provided with information about concussion either at clinics during the summer, NFHS rulebooks and other publications and/or online courses regarding concussions. The area of concussion management has become a point of emphasis for the NFHS and, with the passage of SB1 by the New Mexico Legislature, has become a “hot button” issue statewide.

The following are ***mechanics for officiating a concussion*** in any and all sports, in concert with the NFHS Concussion Management Guidelines and additional information provided by the National Association of Sports Officials:

- 1) When a student-athlete displays possible signs and symptoms of a concussion as listed in the NFHS rulebook, stop the game and visit with the athlete in question. You may want to get one of your partners involved with you in this process.
- 2) Check the student-athlete’s behavior against the list of signs and symptoms. If signs or symptoms are present, remove the student-athlete from the contest.
- 3) Avoid any discussion of cause (how the athlete was injured) with anyone, including coaches, players and fans. The causality is immaterial.
- 4) Do not tell the coaches that you are removing the player because he/she has a concussion. Stay somewhat vague in your discussion with the coach. You may tell the coach simply, “I need you to take a look at Player X.” If the coach does ask why, you can state that the player exhibited one of the signs and symptoms (i.e., dizziness, disorientation, headache, nausea, etc.). Do not mention that you think the player has a concussion because then you are crossing the line into a diagnosis!
- 5) Make note of the jersey number of the athlete, the time at which he/she was removed from the game and the time of re-entry into the game (if applicable).
- 6) Do not ask anyone to sign anything. The new NFHS guidelines and state law do not require signatures from coaches or appropriate health care professionals.
- 7) During the removal of an athlete from a contest, continue to supervise both teams, both benches and keep the athletes separated.
- 8) Do not render first aid to athletes and do not attempt to move them under any circumstance (if they are on the ground).
- 9) Remember that an athlete does not have to be unconscious to have sustained a concussion.
- 10) Most importantly, remember that the decision for a player to return to play falls on the appropriate health care professional and the head coach. The liability for returning an athlete to play is on the school personnel. Do not offer opinions about an athlete’s ability to reenter the game and do not ask questions about the medical personnel. What happens on the sidelines after you remove a player who is displaying signs and symptoms of a concussion is out of your control. Just keep note of who you removed and when and if the player returned so that you have the necessary documentation should questions arise. Leave return to play decisions to the appropriate individuals on the sideline.