

Head Injury Policy

Introduction

In compliance with Utah State Board of Education Rule R277-614, Gateway Preparatory Academy has established this Head Injury and Concussion Policy to provide education about concussions for school personnel, parents, and students. This policy outlines procedures for staff to follow in managing concussions and school policy related to 'return to play' issues following a concussion.

Gateway Preparatory Academy seeks to provide a safe return to activity for all students following any injury, but particularly after a concussion. In order to effectively and consistently manage these injuries, procedures have been developed to aid in ensuring that concussed students are identified, assessed and referred appropriately to health care professionals and that they receive appropriate follow-up medical care during the school day and are fully recovered prior to returning to activity.

School administration, physical education specialists and applicable school committees must review this protocol annually. Any changes or modifications to this policy will be reviewed with and given to physical education staff and other appropriate school personnel in writing.

All appropriate staff must attend a yearly in-service meeting in which procedures for managing sporting event-related concussions are discussed.

Recognition of Concussion

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury that interferes with the normal function of the brain. It occurs when the brain is rocked back and forth or twisted inside the skull as a result of a blow to the head or body. What may appear to be only a mild jolt or blow to the head or body can result in a concussion. A concussion can occur even if a student in an activity is not knocked out or has lost consciousness.

Common signs of a concussion that can be observed by others, are that a student:

- a. Appears dazed or stunned
- b. Is confused
- c. Moves clumsily (has altered coordination)
- d. Has balance problems
- e. Experiences a personality change
- f. Responds slowly to questions
- g. Forgets events prior to hit
- h. Forgets events after the hit
- i. Experiences a loss of consciousness of any duration

Common symptoms of a sports-related concussion that are reported by the student include:

- a. Headache
- b. Fatigue
- c. Nausea or vomiting
- d. Double vision; blurry vision
- e. Sensitive to light or noise
- f. Feeling sluggish
- g. Feeling “foggy”
- h. Problems concentrating

These signs and symptoms following a witnessed or suspected blow to the head or body are indicative of probable concussion. Any student who exhibits these signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion, or balance problems) shall/will be immediately removed from the activity and will not be permitted to return until cleared by an appropriate health care professional.

Management and Referral Guidelines for All Staff

The following situations indicate a medical emergency and require activation of the Emergency Medical System:

1. Any student with a witnessed loss of consciousness (LOC) of any duration should be spine boarded and transported immediately to the nearest emergency department via emergency vehicle.
2. Any student who has symptoms of a concussion, and who is not stable (i.e., condition is worsening), is to be transported immediately to the nearest emergency department via emergency vehicle.

3. A student who exhibits any of the following symptoms should be transported immediately to the nearest emergency department, via emergency vehicle.
 - a. Deterioration of neurological function
 - b. Decreasing level of consciousness
 - c. Decrease or irregularity in respirations
 - d. Any signs or symptoms of associated injuries, spine or skull fracture, or bleeding
 - e. Mental status changes including lethargy, difficulty maintaining arousal, confusion or agitation.
 - f. Seizure activity
4. A student who is symptomatic but stable may be transported by his or her parents. The parents should be advised to contact the student's primary care provider, or seek care at the nearest emergency department, on the day of the injury.

Guidelines and Procedures for Teachers Supervising Contests and Games:

Recognize Concussion:

1. All educators and employees of Gateway Preparatory Academy should become familiar with the signs and symptoms of concussion that are described above.
2. Educators and employees of Gateway Preparatory Academy shall/will have appropriate training about recognizing and responding to traumatic head injuries, consistent with the employees' responsibilities for supervising students and athletes.

Remove from Activity

Any student who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion, or balance problems) as described above, shall/will be immediately removed from the activity and shall will not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health care professional. **When in doubt, sit them out!**

Refer the Student for Medical Evaluation:

An employee of Gateway Preparatory Academy is responsible for notifying the student's parent(s) of the injury and appropriate processes.

- a. Contact the parent(s) to inform them of the injury. Depending on the injury, either an emergency vehicle will transport or parent(s) will pick the student up at the event for transport.
- b. A medical evaluation is required before returning to play.

- c. In the event that a student's parent(s) cannot be reached, and the student is able to be sent home (rather than directly to MD), an employee of Gateway Preparatory Academy should do the following:
 - a. A Gateway Preparatory Academy employee should insure that the student will be with a responsible individual who is capable of monitoring the student and understanding the home care instructions, before allowing the student to go home.
 - b. A Gateway Preparatory Academy employee should continue efforts to reach a parent.
 - c. If there is any question about the status of the student, or if the student cannot be monitored appropriately, the student should be referred to an emergency department for evaluation. A Gateway Preparatory Academy employee should accompany the student and remain with the student until a parent arrives.
 - d. A Gateway Preparatory Academy employee shall provide for supervision of other students for whom he or she is responsible when accompanying the injured student.

Return to Play (RTP) Procedures After Concussion

Return to activity and play is a medical decision. The student must meet all of the following criteria in order to progress to activity:

1. Asymptomatic at rest and with exertion (including mental exertion in school) AND
2. Have written clearance from the student's primary care provider or concussion specialist (student must be cleared for progression to activity by a physician other than an Emergency Room physician, if diagnosed with a concussion).

Once the above criteria are met, the student will be progressed back to full activity following the step-wise process detailed below. An employee of Gateway Preparatory Academy must/will closely supervise this progression. The teacher in charge must have a very specific plan to follow as directed by the student's physician.

Progression is individualized, and will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Factors that may affect the rate of progression include previous history of concussion, duration and type of symptoms, age of the student, and sport/activity in which the student was injured. A student with a prior history of concussion, one who has had an extended duration of symptoms, or one who is participating in a collision or contact sport may be progressed more slowly.

Stepwise Process:

Step 1. Complete cognitive rest. This may include staying home from school or limiting school hours (and studying) for several days. Activities requiring concentration and attention may worsen symptoms and delay recovery.

Step 2. Return to school full-time.

Step 3. Light exercise. This step cannot begin until the student is no longer having concussion symptoms and is cleared by a physician for further activity. At this point the athlete may begin walking or riding an exercise bike. No weight lifting.

Step 4. Running in the gym or on the field.

Step 5. Resume full activity.

The student should spend one to two days at each step before advancing to the next. If post-concussion symptoms occur at any step, student must stop the activity and the treating physician must be contacted. Depending upon the specific type and severity of the symptoms, the student may be told to rest for 24 hours and then resume activity at a level one step below where he or she was at when the symptoms occurred. This resumption of activity could be considerably simplified for a student injured during recess compared to a student injured at a game or formal practice.

Potential Problem Areas

While current Utah law designates that a student may be returned to normal activity by “an appropriate health care provider”, Gateway Preparatory Academy, in its sole discretion, may limit the credentials from which it will accept clearance in its sole discretion. Generally, students will be required to provide a note from his/her their health care provider before being allowed to return to normal activity. This is a very important decision and will be made after careful consideration by the physical education teacher, Director, teacher (elementary), and parent(s). The school's liability carrier may also be consulted.

Gateway Preparatory Academy will not allow students who are clearly having concussion symptoms to return to play even if given clearance by a health care provider.

Board Reviewed and Approved:

March 9th, 2017