



Dallas JR/SR High School Concussion Policy & Protocol

If a member of the Dallas JR/SR High School department of athletics has a concern that a student-athlete may have sustained a sports concussion due to their participation in athletics, this policy and protocol will be followed.

- **If a student-athlete is suspected to have a concussion he or she WILL NOT be permitted to return to their respective sport on that same day.**
- **The student-athlete MUST be evaluated by the certified athletic trainer as soon as possible.**
- **The health and well-being of the student-athlete will be the primary consideration throughout the process.**

Definition of a concussion:

“A concussion is defined as a disturbance in brain function caused by a direct or indirect force to the head. It results in a variety of non-specific signs and/or symptoms and most often does not involve a loss of consciousness.” (*5th International Consensus Meeting on Concussion in Sport, Berlin, Germany, 2016, British Journal of Sports Med; 2017.*)

- Concussion may be caused by a direct blow to the head, face, neck, or elsewhere on the body with an impulsive force transmitted to the head.
- Concussion typically results in the rapid onset of short lived impairment of neurological function that resolves spontaneously.
- Concussion may result in neuropathological changes, but the acute clinical symptoms largely reflect a functional disturbance rather than structural injury.
- Concussion results in a graded set of clinical syndromes that may or may not involve loss of consciousness. Resolution of the clinical and cognitive symptoms typically follows a sequential course.
- Concussion is typically associated with grossly normal structural neuroimaging studies.
- Concussion typically takes longer to resolve in student-athletes younger than 18 years of age, as their brains are still developing.

Signs and Symptoms of Concussion:

A concussion will be suspected if a Dallas JR/SR High School student-athlete presents with one or more of the following signs, symptoms, or problems in excess of their baseline score (if applicable) after sustaining direct OR indirect contact to the head. If no baseline test is available, a student-athlete must be symptom free according to the certified athletic trainer's assessment.

Any student-athlete with signs, symptoms, or problems will be removed from play that day, monitored, and WILL NOT return to play on the day of injury.

The following is a list of possible signs, symptoms, or problems of a concussion. This list is not all inclusive, and other signs, symptoms or problems may be present that are not listed.

- Headache
- Nervous / Anxious
- "Pressure in the head"
- Trouble falling asleep
- Neck pain
- "Just wants to fall asleep"
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Feeling "in a fog"
- Slurred speech
- Vision problems
- More emotional than usual / crying
- Hearing problems / ringing in ears
- Irritability
- Feeling "dinged" or "dazed"
- Sadness
- Confusion
- Sensitivity to light and noise
- Fatigue
- Drowsiness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Convulsions or seizures
- Loss of consciousness
- "Don't feel right"
- Difficulty concentrating

Referral Guidelines:

Once a student-athlete has presented with any of the above signs, symptoms, or problems he or she will be monitored on a continuous basis until one of the following scenarios is determined:

1. Immediate referral to emergency room:

Any student-athlete with any of the following signs, symptoms, or problems will be referred to the emergency room immediately via EMS upon on-field assessment:

- Deterioration of neurological function
- Decreasing level of consciousness
- Irregular respirations
- Irregular pulse
- Unequal, dilated, or unreactive pupils
- Any signs or symptoms of associated injuries (i.e. spine or skull fracture)
- Mental status changes: lethargy, difficulty maintaining arousal, confusion
- Cranial nerve deficits
- Uncontrollable vomiting
- Seizure activity

- Post-concussion symptoms that worsen while being monitored
2. **Release of the student-athlete from supervision of a Certified Athletic Trainer with Take-Home Instructions:**
If the student-athlete has shown an improvement in their signs, symptoms or problems by the end of the practice or competition, they will be given Take-Home Instructions. These instructions will also be explained and given to the parent/guardian to insure proper monitoring.
 3. **Delayed referral (after day of injury):**
If a student-athlete that was released from the supervision of a Certified Athletic Trainer and given Take-Home Instructions presents with any of the following signs, symptoms, or problems after the day of injury, he/she will be referred to a physician.
 - Any of the findings from section one (“Immediate referral to ER”) that have developed since the initial evaluation
 - Post-concussion symptoms worsen or do not improve over time
 - Increase in the number of post-concussion symptoms reported
 - Post-concussion symptoms begin to interfere with the athlete’s daily activities

Return to Play Assessment:

The Dallas High School Department of Athletic Training will utilize the SCAT5 (Sport Concussion Assessment Tool) and BESS (Balance Error Scoring System). The SCAT5 is a standardized method of evaluating people after concussion in sport and can also be used for patient education. The BESS is a standardized method of evaluating a student-athletes proprioception and balance. The certified athletic trainer will determine appropriate return to play guidelines for each individual case, under the supervision of a team physician. The supervising team physician has the discretion to allow the certified athletic trainer to evaluate and treat concussions, as deemed necessary and according to this policy and protocol.

Return to Play Guidelines:

Once a student-athlete has displayed any of the signs, symptoms, or problems stated above he or she will be removed from practice or competition for the remainder of the day. When the student-athlete is symptom free for 24 hours, he or she will be retested using the SCAT5 and/or BESS. The student-athlete will not be physically tested until the SCAT5 and/or BESS have returned to baseline (normal) if a baseline was recorded.

Physical Exertion Testing Protocol:

The student-athlete must be symptom free each consecutive day before he or she can progress to the next step in the sequence. The student-athlete will not be returned to full participation until he or she has remained symptom free for at least 12-24 hours and has passed all exertional testing without experiencing any signs, symptoms or problems.

Step 1: Aerobic exercise – stationary bike, treadmill, etc.

Step 2: Non-contact drills, sport-specific practice exercises.

Step 3: Controlled contact practice drills.

Step 4: Full contact practice.

Step 5: Return to competition.

* Each sport participant must sign an agreement understanding the risks of sport concussions. This is found on the PIAA Comprehensive Initial Pre-Participation Examination (CIPPE) form

** This policy and protocol will be reviewed on an annual basis, and updated as needed.

Revised 8/22