

**Sports-Related Head Injuries Policy for:  
MATCH NEXT  
MATCH MIDDLE SCHOOL  
MATCH HIGH SCHOOL**

**Preface:**

The Athletic Departments at Match Charter Public School (“Match”) aim to promote Match’s mission by providing high-quality extra-curricular athletic opportunities (“sports”)<sup>1</sup> for Match students. Sports participation, while valuable, includes inherent risk of injury, including head injuries. A head injury is any direct blow to the head or indirect trauma to the head including a concussion or traumatic brain injury. Scalp or facial laceration alone is not considered to be a head injury.

**Statement of Protocol:**

The purpose of the Sports-Related Head Injuries Policy (the “Policy”) is to protect the health and safety of Match students between grades 6 and 12 who participate in sports (“athletes”) by outlining standardized procedures, as required by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (the “DPH”), to be followed by Match staff members and any other Match-affiliated individual who is involved in the prevention, training, management, and return to activity decisions regarding athletes who incur head injuries while involved in sports. The Policy is meant to ensure that concussed athletes are identified, treated and referred appropriately, provided with medical care and academic assistance during the school day as needed, and are fully recovered prior to returning to activity. This policy and its implementation shall at all times be subject to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Regulations (FERPA), the Massachusetts Student Records Regulations (603 CMR 23.00) and the Student Records Policy.

**Administrative Guidelines:**

Individuals responsible for administering the athletics program (the “Athletic Directors”) will report annual statistics regarding head injuries at his/her school at the end of each academic year to the Executive Director of Network Operations, or his/her designee, who will submit aggregated statistics to DPH. Review and revision of this Policy shall occur as needed and at least every two years. All documentation created or collected in connection with this Policy shall be maintained for a period of three years, or at a minimum, until the student graduates. Such records will be made available to DPH and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education upon request.

**A. Person Responsible for Implementation of School Policy:**

- I. Match: The Executive Director of Network Operations, or his/her designee will be responsible for the implementation of the Policy which shall apply to all athletes. Such responsibilities include:
  - a. Assisting in reviewing and updating the policy every two years; and
  - b. Enforcing all requirements contained herein related to:
    - i. Procedures;
    - ii. documentation;
    - iii. training; and
    - iv. reporting.

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<sup>1</sup> An extracurricular athletic activity is an organized school sponsored athletic activity generally occurring outside of school instructional hours under the direction of a coach or Athletic Director, including but not limited to baseball, basketball, cheerleading, cross country, soccer, and track (indoor and outdoor). All interscholastic athletics are deemed to be extracurricular athletic activities.

## **B. Annual Training Requirement:**

- I. Professional Development for Staff: Match will provide yearly head injury safety training, organized by the Executive Director of Network Operations or his/her designee which shall include information related to second impact syndrome. An attendance roster will serve as a record of verification of completion of the required training. Alternatively, individuals may complete a DPH-approved online training program and submit a certificate of completion to the Athletic Director at each school. Trainings will be completed by:
  - a. Coaches;
  - b. volunteers (e.g. parents, students, siblings, etc.);
  - c. school nurses; and
  - d. Athletic Directors.

In addition, the school nurse shall periodically provide ongoing educational materials on head injury and concussion to teachers, staff and students.

- II. Training for Athletes and Parents: Match will provide information related to head injury during each sport's pre-season meeting. Athletes and parents/guardians will then review DPH-approved written materials provided by Match and submit a verification form certifying that they have viewed and understood the educational materials. The Athletic Director will ensure that the following individuals minimally certify that they have received the required training:
  - a. Every athlete; and
  - b. one parent or guardian for every athlete.

Documentation of completion of training will be maintained by the Athletic Director or his/her designee.

## **C. Pre-Participation Medical Forms and History:**

- I. Physical Examination: Each athlete must have documentation of a recent (within last 12 months) physical examination on file with the school nurse prior to the first day of try-outs/practice for that season. Students who participate in more than one season are not required to submit more than one physical examination for each year. The Athletic Director will communicate with the school nurse to ensure that no athlete participates in a sport in any capacity without an updated physical examination.
- II. Pre-participation Head Injury Reporting Forms: A parent or guardian must complete Match's *Pre-Participation Head Injury/Concussion Reporting Form* and submit it to the Athletic Director prior to the start of each season in which an athlete plans to participate in an extracurricular athletic activity. The Athletic Director will timely review such forms, and will share the form for retention by the school nurse and consult with the school nurse and coach regarding each athlete with any history of one or more head injuries. In the event that an athlete has experienced multiple concussions, the Athletic Director should consult with the athlete's physician, a concussion specialist and/or neuropsychologist, if involved, the appropriate school athletic staff, and the parent to the maximize extent possible before allowing the athlete to participate:

- a. For any athletes with a history of head injuries, the school nurse shall:
  - i. address any questions raised by the Athletic Director;
  - ii. communicate with the coach regarding the athlete's concussion history and discuss any concerns; and
  - iii. follow up with parents and athletes as needed prior to the athlete's participation in any extracurricular athletic activities.
  
- b. As evidence indicates that youth who have experienced a past head injury may be more likely to suffer a subsequent concussion, Athletic Departments will prioritize protecting the health and safety of athletes who have experienced multiple concussions. To minimize the risk of re-injury, Athletic Departments may require or encourage athletes to abstain from participation in sports, switch positions, limit contact in practices and/or change sports as necessary.

The school nurse shall maintain the *Pre-Participation Head Injury/Concussion Reporting Form* in the student's health record.

#### **D. Reporting and Reviewing Sports-Related Head Injuries During the Season:**

- I. Reporting: In order to assure the health, safety and care of athletes who experience a head injury during practice or contest, and to ensure timely review of all reports of head injuries, the following procedures will be followed when an athlete is removed from play because of a suspected head injury:
  - a. The coach must attempt to communicate the nature of the injury directly to the parent in person or by phone immediately after the practice or competition in which the athlete has been removed from play due to a suspected head injury;
  - b. The coach must also provide this information to the parent in writing, whether paper or electronic format, by the end of the next business day;
  - c. The coach or his/her designee must communicate, by the end of the next business day, with the school nurse and the Athletic Director, that a student has been removed from an athletic extracurricular activity due to a suspected head injury;
  - d. The coach or his/her designee will complete the *Report of Head Injury During Sports Season Form* as soon as possible and no more than one business day after the injury;
    - i. Blank copies of *Report of Head Injury During Sports Season Form* will be available:
      1. In the school nurse's office;
      2. in the Athletic Director's office; and
      3. on the Match Charter Public School website under the "For Families" tab.
  - e. The coach or his/her designee will provide a copy of the completed *Report of Head Injury During Sports Season Form* to the Athletic Director and the school nurse;
  - f. The school nurse will timely review the *Report of Head Injury During Sports Season Form* and contact athlete's teachers as necessary; and

- g. The school nurse will maintain the completed *Report of Head Injury During Sports Season Form* in the athlete's health record.

- II. Parental Reporting: Athletes' parents or guardians are responsible for completing and submitting to the Athletic Director the *Report of Head Injury During Sports Season Form* in the event that an athlete sustains a head injury during the season, but not while participating in a Match-affiliated extracurricular athletic activity. During the sports season, upon receipt of such a form, the following steps will be taken:
  - a. The Athletic Director and the coach will review the completed *Report of Head Injury During Sports Season Form* in a timely manner and provide a copy to the school nurse;
  - b. the school nurse will timely review the *Report of Head Injury During Sports Season Form* and contact athlete's teachers as necessary; and
  - c. The school nurse will maintain the completed *Report of Head Injury During Sports Season Form* in the athlete's health record.

## **E. Removing Athletes from Play and Medical Response:**

- I. Removal from Activities: In the event that an athlete receives a head injury, or is symptomatic of having a head injury, the coach will remove the athlete from all activities, the student may not return to the activity on that day, and the coach shall immediately report the incident to the school nurse.
- II. Medical Treatment: An athlete who is symptomatic , or suspected, of having a head injury will be treated as follows:
  - a. Should an athlete lose consciousness for any reason, the the coach should activate EMS, taking take care not to move the athlete until help arrives;
  - b. The coach or his/her designee will notify the athlete's parents of the injury as soon as possible and, if at an away game, should seek assistance from the host site as needed;
  - c. If an athlete who is removed from the game or practice because of a suspected head injury begins to develop any sign and symptom of worsening brain injury, EMS should be activated immediately. Such signs and symptoms include, but are not limited to:
    - i. Amnesia lasting longer than 15 minutes;
    - ii. deterioration in neurological function;
    - iii. decreasing level on consciousness;
    - iv. decrease or irregularity in respirations;
    - v. decrease or irregularity in pulse;
    - vi. increase in blood pressure;
    - vii. unequal, dilated, or un-reactive pupils;
    - viii. cranial nerve deficits;
    - ix. any signs or symptoms of associated injuries, spine or skull fracture, or bleeding;
    - x. mental-status changes: lethargy, difficulty maintaining arousal, confusion, agitation;
    - xi. seizure activity;

- xii. vomiting/ worsening headache;
- xiii. motor deficits subsequent to initial on-field assessment;
- xiv. sensory deficits subsequent to initial on-field assessment;
- xv. balance deficits subsequent to initial on-field assessment;
- xvi. cranial nerve deficits subsequent to initial on-field assessment; and
- xvii. post-concussion symptoms worsen.

III. Aftercare: If an athlete is symptomatic, but stable (i.e. not showing any sign of worsening brain injury), the following steps should be taken:

- a. If there is any question about the status of the athlete, or if the coach determines that the athlete is not able to be monitored appropriately, the athlete should be referred to the emergency department for evaluation. The coach or his/her designee will accompany the athlete and remain with the athlete until a parent/guardian arrives, when possible;
- b. Any athlete who is stable may be released from the care of the coach or his/her designee, rather than referred for evaluation, provided that:
  - I. The athlete's parent/guardian, or his/her designee is notified and gives permission for the athlete to be released after the coach or his/her designee provides educational information regarding signs and symptoms of deteriorating brain injury/function which would prompt immediate referral to a local emergency room, as well as information regarding the *Post Sports-Related Head Injury Medical Clearance and Authorization form*, which is required for return to play;
  - II. the athlete with a suspected head injury is not permitted to drive home;
  - III. when possible, the athlete's parent/guardian should ensure that symptomatic athlete is referred to a physician for evaluation; and
  - IV. when possible, the athlete should be released to the care of a responsible adult who is capable of monitoring his or her health.

## **F. Development and Implementation of the Post-Concussion Graduated Reentry Plans:**

- I. Reentry: The school nurse shall be responsible for developing and implementing a post-concussion graduated reentry plan for athletes who have suffered from a concussion. An injured athlete may recover more quickly with rest from physical exertion, athletic activity, and the cognitive demands of academic work. As such, the school nurse will collaborate with the student's physician, the appropriate staff, including but not limited to, teachers, Mental Health Professionals, the special education team and parents/guardians to create an individualized graduated re-entry plan for return to academic and extracurricular and athletic activities for athletes who experienced a head injury. A student may only start a graduated return to play program when he/she is completely symptom-free at rest and does not have any symptoms that prevent a full return to academic activities. All plans will minimally include:
  - a. Physical and cognitive rest as appropriate
  - b. gradual, incremental return to physical and cognitive activities;
  - c. estimated time intervals for resumption of activities; and

- d. frequency of assessments by the school nurse until full return to classroom activities and extracurricular activities are authorized; and
- e. a plan for communication and coordination between and among school personnel and between the school, the parent, and the student's physician.

## **G. Medical Clearance to Return to Play:**

- I. Clearance: If an athlete is removed from play for a suspected head injury and has completed his/her graduated return to play plan, he/she must be medically cleared and evaluated before returning to play/practice in accordance with the following:
  - a. Medical clearance may only be documented using the *Post Sports-Related Head Injury Medical Clearance and Authorization form* that is available with all other athletic department forms on the Match website, and in the Athletic Directors' and school nurses' offices. The athlete and the parents/guardians are responsible for providing the required form to the medical professional<sup>2</sup> at the time of exam, as alternative forms will not be accepted. Completed forms must be provided to the coach or Athletic Director upon return to school, and the form will be shared with the school nurse and Athletic Director for review. A copy will be kept in the athlete's medical record in the nurse's office. The ultimate decision to allow a student to return to play may involve a multidisciplinary approach, including consultation with parents, the school nurse and teachers as appropriate.
  - b. An athlete who has received medical clearance but who demonstrates symptoms thereafter should be withheld from participation in sports. Should such a situation arise, the school nurse should communicate with the athlete, the athlete's parent/guardian, the coach, the Athletic Director, and the health care provider who provided clearance to allow for reevaluation by the health care provider, if necessary.

## **H. Dissemination of Policy:**

- I. Match Athletics Handbook: This Policy will be included in the Match Athletics Handbook which is distributed to all parents/guardians of athletes and is available on the Match website. Information regarding the Policy and how to obtain it will be also be included in the Match Student and Family

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<sup>2</sup> Only one of the following individuals who have verified that they have received DPH-approved training in post-traumatic head injury assessment and management or have received equivalent training may authorize a student to return to play:

- i. licensed physician;
- ii. licensed athletic trainer in consultation with a licensed physician;
- iii. licensed nurse practitioner in consultation with a licensed physician;
- iv. licensed physician assistant under the supervision of a licensed physician (in which case the authorization must be provided by the supervising physician); or
- v. a licensed neuropsychologist in coordination with the physician managing the athlete's recovery.

Handbook. Further, the Policy will be included as a standalone policy on the Match website, along with links to relevant information including:

- a. DPH-approved information and training regarding head injury training; and
- b. the following required forms for parents, athletes, and medical professionals:
  - i. *Pre-participation Head Injury/Concussion Reporting Form*;
  - ii. *Report of Head Injury During Sports Season Report Form*; and
  - iii. *Post Sports-related Head Injury Medical Clearance and Authorization Form*

## **I. Communication with Parents/Guardians with Limited English Proficiency:**

- I. Translation/Interpretation Service: Match is committed to serving parents and guardians who have difficulty communicating with school personnel in English. All sports-injury related materials including the on-line training classes, the CDC fact sheets on concussions and the required forms are available in Spanish on Match's website. Further, Match will translate other materials as requested, or when necessary. In the event an athlete receives, or is suspected of having, a head injury, the Athletic Director will ensure that the parent is notified in the appropriate language via interpreter, if necessary.

## **J. Outreach to Parents to Ensure Form and Training Completion:**

- I. Enforcement of Policy: Absent extenuating circumstances, athletes will not be permitted to participate in sports until both the parent and athlete have completed and returned the signed *Pre-Participation Head Injury/Concussion Reporting Form* before the start of every sports season. In the event the school has not received the *Pre-Participation Head Injury/Concussion Reporting Form* or other required forms, including documentation of an annual physical examination and documentation that both the athlete and his/her parent/guardian have completed the required annual training, the athlete will not be allowed to play or practice until the required signed and completed forms are returned to the Athletic Director. Coaches, nurses, Athletic Directors and other staff will be responsible for contacting parents and athletes as needed.

## **K. Teaching Strategies that Minimize Sports-Related Head Injuries and Prohibit Dangerous Play:**

- I. Instruction: Coaches and Athletic Directors will:
  - a. Insist that safety comes first and develop, teach, implement, and enforce safety rules;
  - b. promote good officiating of the existing rules;
  - c. emphasize to athletes and parents that playing with a head injury is dangerous;
  - d. promote safe use of equipment all year; require that sports participants use the right protective equipment during all practices and games and that all equipment, particularly helmets, are properly fitted;
  - e. ensure that spaces and facilities for physical activity meet or exceed recommended safety standards for design, installation and maintenance;

- f. check all equipment to ensure they are up to manufacturer standards of quality and care;
- g. ensure that athletes wear the right protective equipment for their activity (such as helmets, padding, shin guards, mouth protectors and eye and mouth guards). Protective equipment should fit properly, be well maintained, not be expired, and be worn consistently and correctly;
- h. prohibit athletes from engaging in any unreasonably dangerous athletic technique that endangers the health or safety of an athlete; and
- i. discourage individuals from pressuring injured athletes to play.

## **L. Penalties:**

- I. Discipline: Match takes the safety of athletes seriously. All members of the Match community, including staff, volunteers, students and families are expected to follow this policy to support the health and safety of all athletes. The underlying philosophy of this policy is “when in doubt, sit them out.” Failure to comply with this policy could result in discipline for staff and/or forfeiture of games. Questions or concerns regarding the Policy should be directed the Executive Director of Network Operations at the following address: attn: Nnenna Ude, Match Charter Public School, 215 Forest Hills St., Jamaica Plain, MA 02130.