



Ohio's Return to Play Law: What Coaches & Referees Need to Know - Youth Sports Organizations

Training In Recognizing the Signs and Symptoms of a Concussion

Individuals who wish to coach or referee in a youth sports organization will be required to successfully complete, every three years, a [free online training program](#) in recognizing the symptoms of concussions and head injuries provided by the Ohio Department of Health if they do not hold a [Pupil Activity Permit](#).

Coaches who already have a current PAP will be required to present evidence that they have successfully completed a training program in recognizing the symptoms of concussions and head injuries that is linked on the [Department of Health's website](#) **or** a training program authorized and required by an organization that regulates interscholastic conferences or events in order to renew their permit (permit renewals occur every three-years [ORC 3319.303](#)).

Online Training

The current, free online trainings that have been approved by ODH to meet the training requirement for coaches and referees are listed on the **ODH Website, under Online Concussions Management Training** at: [Concussion Management Training](#).

PLEASE NOTE: All 3 courses offer a “certificate of completion” upon successful passage.

Removal from Play^{1 2}

Coaches, referees, or officials must remove an athlete if the athlete is exhibiting the signs and symptoms of a concussion during practice or a game. These include:

- Appears dazed or stunned.
- Is confused about assignment or position.
- Forgets instruction, is confused about an assignment or position, or unsure of the game, score or opponent.
- Moves clumsily.
- Answers questions slowly.
- Loses consciousness (*even briefly*).
- Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes.
- Can't recall events before or after a hit or fall.
- Headache or “pressure” in head.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Balance problems or dizziness, or double or blurry vision.
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy.
- Confusion, or concentration or memory problems.
- Just not “feeling right,” or “feeling down”.



Dangerous Signs & Symptoms of a Concussion¹

- One pupil larger than the other.
- Drowsiness or inability to wake up.
- A headache that gets worse and does not go away.
- Slurred speech, weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination.
- Repeated vomiting or nausea, convulsions or seizures (shaking or twitching).
- Unusual behavior, increased confusion, restlessness, or agitation.
- Loss of consciousness (passed out/knocked out). Even a brief loss of consciousness should be taken seriously.

The athlete cannot return to play on the same day that he or she is removed.

Return to Play (*This Includes Games, Practice, And Training*)²

The athlete cannot return to play on the same day that he or she is removed. Under Ohio law (ORC [3313.539](#) and ORC [3707.511](#)), a physician (in accordance with the Ohio Revised Code and Ohio Administrative Code) must provide **WRITTEN** clearance for an athlete to return to play.

It is important to review your youth sports organizations' policy regarding what health care providers are authorized to clear an athlete to return to play.

Medical Review Clearance Forms

For school sports that are members of the Ohio High School Athletic Association, there is an OHSAA sanctioned form available at:

<https://ohsaa.org/Portals/0/Sports-Medicine/AuthorizationToReenter.pdf>

For youth sports organizations and schools that are not part of OHSAA, there is no specific form that must be filled out by a healthcare provider authorizing an athlete to return to play; however, the Ohio Department of Health has made one available at: [Return to Play-Medical Clearance Form](#).

For More Information

¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - Head's Up in Youth Sports:

<https://www.cdc.gov/headsup/youthsports/>

²Consensus Statement Concussion in Sport:

[Consensus Statement Concussion in Sport](#)

Ohio Department of Health - Ohio's Return to Play Law:

<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/concussion>

Ohio Department of Education – Pupil Activity Permit:

<http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Teaching/Licensure/Audiences/Coaching-Permits>