

## **Orange Recreation Association Youth Sports Concussion Policy**

Orange Recreation Association has created the following policy that will be in effect as of **January 2016** and beyond.

### **Objective:**

To establish a policy that will provide ALL youth sport coaches and parents associated with the Orange Recreation Association with guidelines relating to how to recognize signs of a concussion, procedures for dealing with athletes and parents when a concussion is suspected, as well as mandatory rules concerning the return to action for the participant.

### **Criteria:**

A concussion can be caused by a blow to the head, jolt to the body, or any sudden force that results in a rapid acceleration/deceleration of the brain inside the skull. This impact of the brain against the rigid inside walls of the skull can cause a change in neurological function and a host of other symptoms depending on which part of the brain was injured. Youth athletes are particularly vulnerable to the effects of a concussion. Even what appears to be a "minor ding or bell ringer" has the real risk of catastrophic results when an athlete is returned to action too soon. Second impact syndrome, which in some cases can be fatal, is a direct result of returning to game action before all symptoms have cleared. While most players heal within a few weeks, an athlete who returns to play before a concussion has completely resolved risks re-injuring an already injured brain which can have life threatening consequences.

Therefore, continued participation in any sport following a concussion can lead to worsening concussion symptoms, as well as increased risk for further injury to the brain, and even death.

The well-being of the athlete/participant is our greatest concern during any practice or game. Officials, coaches, and parents are being asked to make all efforts to ensure that concussed athletes do not continue to participate. Thus, coaches, parents, and officials should be looking for signs of concussion in all athletes and shall immediately remove any suspected concussed participant from play.

**When in doubt, sit them out!** It's far better to miss one or two games as a precautionary matter than to risk possible brain injury. No game is worth that.

### **What to look for:**

Concussions can appear in many different ways. We know that a person does not have to lose consciousness to suffer a concussion. Any athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion, such as those mentioned below shall be immediately removed from the game or practice and shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health-care professional.

#### **1. PROBLEMS IN BRAIN FUNCTION:**

- a. Confused state – dazed look, vacant stare or confusion about what happened or is happening.
- b. Memory Problems – can't remember assignment on play, opponent, score of game, or period of game; can't remember how or with whom he or she traveled to the game, what he or she is wearing, what was eaten for breakfast, etc.
- c. Symptoms reported by participant – headache, nausea or vomiting; blurred or double vision; oversensitivity to sound, light or touch; ringing in ears; feeling foggy or groggy; dizziness.
- d. Lack of sustained attention – difficulty sustaining focus adequately to complete a task, a coherent thought, or a conversation.

**2. SPEED OF BRAIN FUNCTION:** Slow response to questions, slow slurred speech, incoherent speech, slow body movements and slow reaction time.

**3. UNUSUAL BEHAVIORS:** Behaving in a combative, aggressive, or very silly manner; non-typical behavior for the individual; repeatedly asking the same question over and over; restless and irritable behavior with constant motion and attempts to return to play; reactions that seems out of proportion and inappropriate; and having trouble resting or "finding a comfortable position."

**4. PROBLEMS WITH BALANCE AND COORDINATION:** Dizziness, slow clumsy movements, inability to walk a straight line or balance on one foot with eyes closed.

### **Seek medical help immediately if...**

Most concussions do not result in emergency care. However, if symptoms worsen, or you notice behavioral changes or any of the following, seek care immediately:

- Headaches that worsen; seizures, neck pain; very drowsy, can't be awakened; repeated vomiting; increasing confusion or irritability; weakness, numbness in arms and legs; inability to recognize people/places, less responsive than usual.

If you observe any of the above signs, call your doctor or go to the emergency room immediately.

**Role of Coaching Staff:**

Coaches/Coaching Staff will NOT be expected to “diagnose” a concussion. That is the job of an appropriate health-care professional. Coaches/Coaching Staffs will be asked to use their best judgment in observing the signs, symptoms and behaviors, associated with concussions. If a member of a youth team coaching staff observes questionable signs, symptoms, or behavior, he/she must remove the participant from the game for further evaluation and notify the parent/guardian.

**The responsibility of further evaluating and managing the symptomatic participant falls upon the head coach, parent/guardian or appropriate health-care professional. If an appropriate health-care professional on site determines that the athlete HAS NOT suffered a concussion, the athlete may return to play. If there is no appropriate health-care professional available to evaluate the athlete, the athlete SHALL NOT be allowed by the coach or parent/guardian to return to play.**

**Role of Game Officials:**

Neither officials, nor coaches, will be expected to “diagnose” a concussion, as that is the job of an appropriate health-care professional. Officials are being asked to use their best judgment in observing the signs, symptoms and behaviors, associated with concussions. Officials will not be asked to make what could be perceived to be a medical opinion. If an official observes questionable signs, symptoms, or behavior, the official must notify the coach and remove the participant from the game for further evaluation.

The game official is not responsible for the sideline evaluation or management of the athlete after he or she is removed from play. The responsibility of further evaluating and managing the symptomatic athlete falls upon the head coach, and/or an appropriate health-care professional. If an appropriate health-care professional on site determines that the athlete HAS NOT suffered a concussion, the athlete may return to play. If there is no appropriate health-care professional available to evaluate the athlete, the athlete **SHALL NOT** be allowed by the coach or parent to return to play. The official does not need written permission for an athlete to return to play after evaluation, nor does the official need to verify the credentials of the appropriate health-care professional. Ensuring compliance is the responsibility of the head coach and NOT the game official.

**Orange Recreation Association Required Course of Action when an athlete is suspected of sustaining a concussion:**

1. Remove athlete from any activity (game or practice).
2. Notify parent or guardian.
3. Any participant suspected of having a concussion should be evaluated by an appropriate health-care professional within a day of the “injury”. NOTE: An “appropriate health-care professional.” A Physician, Physician Assistant, Osteopath Physician, or Athletic Trainer licensed by the Virginia Board of Medicine; a Neuropsychologist licensed by the Boards of Psychology; or a nurse practitioner licensed by the Virginia State Board of Nursing.
4. No participant may return to play or practice on the same day after a concussion has been diagnosed, nor until evaluated by an appropriate health-care professional.
5. Any participant with a concussion shall be medically cleared by an appropriate healthcare professional prior to resuming participation in any practice or league play. This clearance shall be in the form of a written letter signed by the healthcare professional. One copy must be supplied to Orange Recreation Association and one must be supplied to the head coach prior to any return to play. The formulation of a gradual return to play protocol should be a part of the medical clearance.

**NOTE: Athletes with continued concussion symptoms are at significant risk for recurrent, cumulative and even catastrophic consequences of a second concussive injury. Such risks are minimized if the athlete is allowed time to recover from the concussion and return to play decisions are carefully made. No athlete may return-to-sport or other at-risk participation when symptoms of concussion are present and recovery is ongoing.**

These guidelines shall be applied to all sports related activity.

**Coaches Compliance:**

Any coach that disregards the safety and well being of a youth sport(s) participant as it relates to concussions will be suspended indefinitely from coaching. Additionally, any coach that misuses this policy to prohibit an otherwise, healthy, fit, uninjured player from participating will be suspended indefinitely from coaching.

We strongly suggest taking one of the following course on concussions.

<http://www.cdc.gov/headsup/youthsports/training/index.html> or <http://nfhslearn.com/courses/38000>

