



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT OHIO'S RETURN TO PLAY LAW

1. What is Ohio's new "Return to Play" law?

Starting April 26, 2013, Ohio law (O.R.C. 3707.511) requires a youth sports organization to provide a concussion information sheet to the parent/guardian of an individual who wishes to practice for or compete in an athletic activity organized by the organization. Also starting April 26, 2013, all coaches and referees must be trained on the signs, symptoms, and treatment of concussions. The law also has requirements restricting an athlete's ability to return to the field after a concussion is suspected or has been diagnosed.

2. Why was this law passed?

To keep our kids safe! More than 140,000 high school athletes in the U.S. sustain a concussion each year. Among 15-to-24-year-olds, sports are second only to motor vehicle accidents as the leading cause of concussions, according to a study by the Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio.

3. Isn't this new Return to Play law going to be a big hassle for OSYSA, leagues, coaches, referees, officials, and athletes and their families?

No. First, OSYSA understands how important concussion awareness is and the risks to athletes associated with concussions. Any minor inconvenience is far outweighed by the benefit of keeping our young athletes safe!

Second, OSYSA anticipates that coaches, referees, and officials will have no problem watching the 20-minute concussion training videos prior to April 26, 2013. OSYSA has also included lots of concussion-related information for leagues, coaches, referees, officials, and athletes and their families on its website, as has the Ohio Department of Health.

Finally, OSYSA believes that all of its coaches, referees, and officials are already watching for signs and symptoms of concussions in athletes. The Return to Play law provides further structure to the careful prevention and identification of concussions that OSYSA and its leagues already expect of coaches, referees, officials, and athletes and their families.

4. I'm a coach/referee/official, when must I complete my concussion training certification?

The sooner the better! Ohio's new "Return to Play" law goes into effect April 26, 2013, so training **must** be completed by that date.

5. Which training video does OSYSA recommend for coaches, referees, and officials?

Both the CDC and NFHS training videos are great, but completion of the NFHS training allows leagues and OSYSA to look online to determine whether a coach, referee, or official has completed the training. In addition, OSYSA is requiring coaches, referees,



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and officials for Ohio South State League, Olympic Development Program, State Cup, or President's Cup, to complete the NFHA training. Therefore, OSYSA recommends that coaches, referees, and officials complete the NFHA training course.

6. Is there a Spanish version of the concussion training available?

Yes. The Center for Disease Control produced the same training in English and Spanish. Click here for the Spanish version:

<http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/spanish/youth.html>

7. I am a volunteer coach/ referee/official, do I have to complete a concussion training certification?

Yes. The law does not make a distinction between volunteers and paid coaches, referees, and officials.

8. What if I am a referee and I am under 18, do I still need to comply with the Return to Play law?

Yes. All coaches, referees, and officials, regardless of age, or paid or volunteer status, must comply with the Return to Play law.

9. I'm a coach/referee/official, is there a catchy slogan that tells me what to do if I'm not sure whether an athlete is displaying the signs and symptoms of a concussion?

Yes! It's always better to err on the side of safety, so "when in doubt, sit it out."

10. I'm a parent, can I take the training even if I'm not coaching or reffing?

Absolutely! The training is free and available to anyone who is interested in identifying, preventing, and treating concussions. But remember, the coach/referee/official has the ultimate authority to determine whether they believe they have witnessed signs and symptoms of a concussion and have the ultimate authority to require the athlete to sit out the game or practice, even if you disagree. Remember, "when in doubt, sit it out."

11. I'm a coach/referee/official, how often do I have to be certified?

Certifications are valid for three years.

12. How often do leagues need to provide the concussion information sheet to athletes' parents/guardians?

Every year. All of OSYSA's member leagues are responsible to provide at the beginning of each season a Youth Sports Concussion Information Sheet, supplied by the Ohio Department of Health, to the parent or other guardian of each athlete who wishes to practice for or compete in the league



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13. I'm a coach/referee/official and I suspect that an athlete may have a concussion because he/she is showing some of the signs and symptoms of a concussion, but I'm not positive. What do I do?

In most cases, coaches, referees, and officials are not licensed medical professionals and do not have the ability to diagnose concussions. Therefore, if a coach, referee, or official suspects that an athlete has a concussion, based on his training and his observations, he should err on the side of safety and pull the athlete from play. Remember, "when in doubt, sit it out."

14. What is the role of coaches in administering the Return to Play law?

Coaches must know the signs and symptoms of concussions and prohibit any athlete who displays these signs or symptoms from participating in a practice or a contest. Coaches are not medical professionals and have no authority to determine whether or not a student has sustained a concussion, so they should err on the side of safety. The coach is responsible for insuring that the student's parents are notified and the student is referred to a medical professional. The coach is also responsible to ensure that an athlete with a suspected concussion (1) does not return to play that same day, and (2) provides a written medical release from a physician prior to returning to play.

15. I'm a coach and one of my athletes was taken out of play because of a suspected concussion. What do I have to do before I let them back on the field for a game or practice?

An athlete who was taken out of play due to a suspected concussion is not permitted to return to play that same day under any circumstance. Assuming it's not the same day, that athlete must present a written medical release from a licensed medical professional that allows the athlete to return to play. Coaches should provide copies of these written releases to the league so they can be stored and maintained by the league.

16. I'm a coach/referee/official and I'm not sure whether an athlete is displaying the signs and symptoms of a concussion. Can I consult with the other coach/referee/official who witnessed the injury?

Yes. Coaches, referees, and officials should be comfortable consulting each other for assistance in determining whether an athlete is displaying the signs and symptoms of a concussion. Remember, "when in doubt, sit it out."

17. I'm the parent and I don't think my child should be removed from the game or practice, can I stop the coach/referee/official from removing her and/or tell the coach/referee/official to put her back in?

No. Coaches, referees, and officials have been trained on the signs, symptoms, and risks of concussions and must use their own judgment – even if you disagree – to determine



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whether an athlete should be removed from the game or practice if a concussion is suspected. Likewise, a parent cannot direct a coach to let their athlete back in the game or practice (1) that same day, or (2) before receiving written authorization from a medical professional. Remember, “when in doubt, sit it out.”

18. I'm a coach/referee/official and I believe an athlete is displaying symptoms of a concussion, but the parent told me to let the athlete to continue to play. What do I do?

Coaches, referees, and officials must use their own judgment – even if the parents disagree – and remove athletes from games or practice who display symptoms of a concussion. Remember, “when in doubt, sit it out.”

19. Do tournaments count as “youth sports organization” such that the Return to Play law would apply?

Yes. A “youth sports organization” means a public or nonpublic entity that organizes an athletic activity in which the athletes are not more than nineteen years of age and are required to pay a fee to participate in the athletic activity or whose cost to participate is sponsored by a business or nonprofit organization. Leagues, coaches, referees, officials, and athletes and their families must all follow the Return to Play law regardless of whether it's a game, tournament, scrimmage, or practice.

20. How does the new Return to Play law affect out-of-state teams that come to OSYSA-sanctioned tournaments?

Just like any Ohio law, those visiting from out-of-state must comply with the Ohio Return to Play law. The entity that organizes the tournament, which, in most cases, is not OSYSA, must ensure that all coaches and referees are concussion trained and understand Ohio's laws. The good news is that all but a few states (Arkansas, Georgia, Tennessee, South Carolina, West Virginia, and Montana) already enacted similar concussion laws, so most traveling coaches and referees have received this training. The organization responsible for the tournament is also responsible to let the coaches, referees, and officials know their obligations under Ohio law.

21. How does this law affect OSYSA teams that travel to out-of state tournaments?

Anyone coaching an Ohio team must complete concussion training. Any team traveling out-of-state must abide by the laws of that state, which may include additional or different concussion laws. In addition to Ohio, forty-two states currently have some type of youth sports concussion law. Only Arkansas, Georgia, Tennessee, South Carolina, West Virginia, and Montana have not yet passed a similar law, but legislation is pending in Montana, South Carolina, and Tennessee.



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22. Will tournaments be required to comply with the Return to Play law?

Yes. The tournament must provide the concussion head injury information sheet to the player's parent, guardian, or "other person having care or charge" of the player, which may be the coach or a parent of another player. Coaches and referees participating in tournaments must also comply with training requirements and rules related to removal from and return to play.

23. Will tournaments be required to ensure that all of the coaches and referees at the tournament have taken the on line training course?

Yes, if the tournament occurs in Ohio, then the tournament will be required to ensure compliance with Ohio's laws, which means that all coaches traveling from out of state must be concussion certified.

24. How did the various state concussion laws come about?

State concussion laws, sometimes referred to as "Return to Play" or "Lystedt Laws," first gained publicity from Zackery Lystedt who, in 2006, suffered a brain injury following his return to a middle school football game after sustaining a concussion. Zackery, his family and a broad range of medical, business and community partners lobbied the Washington state legislature for a law to protect young athletes in all sports from returning to play too soon. The Lystedt law contains three essential elements:

- Athletes, parents and coaches must be educated about the dangers of concussions each year.
- If a young athlete is suspected of having a concussion, he/she must be removed from a game or practice and not be permitted to return to play. When in doubt, sit them out.
- A licensed health care professional must clear the young athlete to return to play in the subsequent days or weeks.

Most states, including Ohio, have adopted a form of the Lystedt law.

25. Do parents or guardians need to sign anything acknowledging receipt of Ohio Department of Health Concussion Information Sheet?

No. Parents/guardians do not need to sign anything acknowledging receipt of the Ohio Department of Health Concussion Information Sheet, but leagues must be able to demonstrate, if asked by OSYSA, that they have provided the sheets to parents. OSYSA recommends that the leagues include the information sheets in their registration materials.