

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 14-66—sHB 5113
Committee on Children
Education Committee
Appropriations Committee

AN ACT CONCERNING YOUTH ATHLETICS AND CONCUSSIONS

SUMMARY: This act makes several changes and additions to the laws requiring parents, coaches, and school districts to take specific steps to prevent concussions during intramural and interscholastic events.

It (1) requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to develop a concussion education plan and (2) prohibits school boards from allowing a student athlete to participate in any intramural or interscholastic athletic activity unless the athlete and his or her parent or guardian receive training on the plan.

The act also requires:

1. SBE to (a) develop or approve an informed consent form on concussions to be distributed to parents and legal guardians of student athletes involved in intramural and interscholastic athletic activities and (b) annually collect and report to the Department of Public Health (DPH) information from all school districts on concussion occurrences;
2. schools to provide the informed consent form to each student athlete's parent or guardian and get his or her signature authorizing the student to participate in the athletic activity; and
3. coaches or other qualified school employees to notify a student athlete's parent or guardian when the student is removed from play for a concussion or suspected concussion.

The act narrows the scope, from concussions and head injuries to just concussions, of the (1) initial training course and subsequent information review that intramural and interscholastic athletics coaches must complete and (2) training and refresher courses SBE must develop in consultation with several entities. It also specifies that a concussion is a type of brain injury.

The act also broadens the (1) list of entities SBE must consult when developing the training and refresher courses and information review to include the DPH commissioner and (2) information required in the refresher course.

The act establishes a 20-member task force to study concussion occurrences in youth athletics and recommend possible legislative initiatives to address such concussions. The task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Public Health and Children's committees by January 1, 2015.

Lastly, the act makes technical changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2014, except for the task force provision, which is effective upon passage.

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TRAINING AND REVIEW MATERIAL REQUIREMENTS

Prior law required intramural and interscholastic athletics coaches who hold or are issued a coaching permit by SBE to complete an initial training course on concussion and head injuries before beginning a coaching assignment for the school athletics season. They had to subsequently complete a refresher course and annually review materials on concussions and head injuries. The act narrows the scope of the training and review materials to only concussions, eliminating other head injuries. It also requires the initial training course to include information on the danger of continuing to engage in any athletic activity, instead of just returning to play in the same activity, after sustaining a concussion.

The act expands the information required in the refresher course to include (1) an update on current best practices in concussion research, prevention, and treatment and (2) for football coaches, current best practices regarding football coaching, including frequency of games, full contact practices, and scrimmages, as identified by the governing authority for intramural and interscholastic athletics.

The act also requires SBE to consult with the DPH commissioner to develop or approve the concussion training courses and, starting October 1, 2014, annually prepare or approve the review materials. SBE must already consult on these matters with (1) the intramural and interscholastic athletics governing authority, (2) an appropriate organization representing licensed athletic trainers, and (3) an organization representing county medical associations.

CONCUSSION EDUCATION PLAN AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Concussion Education Plan

The act requires SBE, by January 1, 2015, and in consultation with the above entities, to develop or approve a concussion education plan for use by local and regional school boards. The school boards must implement the plan by using written materials, online training or videos, or in-person training. The plan must address:

1. recognition of concussion signs or symptoms;
2. how to obtain proper medical treatment for a person suspected of sustaining a concussion;
3. the nature and risks of concussions, including the danger of continuing to engage in athletic activity after sustaining one;
4. the proper procedures for allowing a student athlete who has sustained a concussion to return to athletic activity; and
5. current best practices in the prevention and treatment of a concussion.

This information, with the exception of the best practices, is also included in the initial concussion training course coaches must complete.

Starting with the 2015-2016 school year, the act prohibits school boards from allowing a student athlete to participate in any intramural or interscholastic athletic activity unless the student and his or her parent or guardian (1) read written materials, (2) view online training or videos, or (3) attend in-person

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training regarding the plan.

Informed Consent Form

The act requires SBE, by July 1, 2015, and in consultation with the same entities, to develop or approve an informed consent form regarding concussions, which must be distributed to parents and legal guardians of student athletes involved in intramural and interscholastic athletic activities. The consent form must include a summary of the (1) concussion education plan and (2) applicable school board concussion policies.

The act requires schools, starting with the 2015-2016 school year, to provide the consent form to each participating student athlete's parent or legal guardian. The schools must also get the parent's or guardian's signature, attesting that he or she received the form and authorizing the student to participate in the athletic activity.

CONCUSSION NOTIFICATION

The act requires a qualified school employee, when a student athlete is removed from an athletic activity for a concussion or suspected concussion, to notify the student's parent or legal guardian that the student has been diagnosed with, or shown signs, symptoms, or behaviors of, a concussion. The employee must (1) provide the notice within 24 hours after removing the student and (2) make a reasonable effort to provide the notice immediately after the student is removed.

A "qualified school employee" is a principal, teacher, licensed athletic trainer, licensed physical or occupational therapist employed by a school district, coach, or school paraprofessional.

SCHOOL DISTRICT AND AGENCY REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The act requires SBE, starting with the 2014-2015 school year, to annually require school districts to collect and report to it all concussion occurrences. The report must include the (1) nature and extent of the concussion and (2) circumstances in which the student sustained it.

SBE, starting with the 2015-2016 school year, must annually send a concussion report to DPH containing all the reported school district concussion information. DPH, starting by October 1, 2015, must annually report the SBE concussion report's findings to the Children's and Public Health committees.

CONCUSSION TASK FORCE

The act establishes a 20-member task force to study concussion occurrences in youth athletics and make recommendations for possible legislative initiatives to address concussions. The study must examine:

1. current best practices for concussion recognition and prevention in youth athletics;
2. current concussion policies and procedures used by youth athletic league

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- operators in the state;
- 3. youth athletic league employee and volunteer training; and
- 4. relevant federal, state, and local concussion laws and regulations.

The task force members must include the public health, children and families, and education commissioners, or their designees, and the appointees shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Concussion Task Force Appointees

<i>Appointing Authority</i>	<i>Number of Appointees</i>	<i>Qualifications</i>
House speaker	Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intramural and interscholastic athletics governing authority representative • Connecticut State Medical Society representative
Senate president pro tempore	Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County medical association representative • American Association of Neurology representative
House majority leader	Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensed athletic trainer representative • Youth athletic coach
Senate majority leader	Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sports medicine physician • Association of School Nurses of Connecticut representative
House minority leader	Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic who has studied the effects of concussions on children • Connecticut Association of Psychologists representative
Senate minority leader	Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecticut Concussion Task Force representative • Connecticut Children's Medical Center representative

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Children's Committee House chairperson	Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent concussion awareness advocacy group representative • State-licensed chiropractor
Children's Committee Senate chairperson	Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecticut Recreation and Parks Association representative • Attorney with experience in representing brain injury survivors
Governor	One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hezekiah Beardsley Connecticut Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics representative

All task force appointments must be made by June 27, 2014. The appointing authority must fill any vacancy. The House speaker and the Senate president pro tempore must select the task force chairpersons from its members, and the chairpersons must schedule the first meeting by July 27, 2014. The Children's Committee administrative staff serves as the task force's administrative staff.

The act requires the task force to report its findings and recommendations to the Public Health and Children's committees by January 1, 2015. The task force terminates on the date it submits the report or January 1, 2015, whichever is later.

OLR Tracking: KMD:JR:JKL:am