



Connecticut Association of School Psychologists
An affiliate of the National Association of School Psychologists

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The Committee on Children
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According to the Centers for Disease Control [CDC], it is estimated that emergency departments in the United States treat an estimated 173, 285 sports- and recreation-related traumatic brain injuries [TBIs], including concussions, in children and adolescents ages birth to 19. They also report that children and teens are more likely to sustain a concussion and take longer to recover than adults.

Public Act 10-62, which went into effect July 1, 2010, requires yearly training on concussions and head injuries for all individuals with active State of Connecticut coaching certificates. Public Act 10-66 and House Bill 5113 passed in May 2014 discussed the training needed for athletic departments, state certified coaches and education staff and the need for developing an education plan that will assist students transition back to learning following such an injury.

The Connecticut Association of School Psychologists [CASP], a professional organization representing school-employed psychologists, strongly supports the need for appropriate screening and referrals to ensure a return to learning that will be appropriate and take into consideration the physical, behavioral and cognitive functions of the injured student. Concussions and other sustained head injuries impact learning, memory and focus. Any interference or difficulties in any of these areas as a result of a head injury can and will have future implications on one's ability to efficiently acquire skills and to perform in an academic and skill-based setting. We support and agree with the plan to remove student athletes from active play until written clearance is received from a licensed healthcare professional with the appropriate credentials and education in assessing and managing concussions. It is essential for the student and school-based teams, including the coaches, that the medical professional meets these requirements to ensure the safety and health of the student.

The health and well-being of a student is a primary concern and of at most importance and while the focus for many athletes is returning to play, of equal importance is a return to learning and return to play [for athletes in elementary grades]. Students must get the clearance from the medical professional and must demonstrate that they have substantially completed their academic obligations. School is the designated location for academic growth and learning and it is a student's obligation to meet these requirements as well. CASP strongly feels that return to academics [RTA] protocols must be further developed. The return to play [RTP] protocols have been well developed and the importance of academics is equally important.



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In addition to coaches and gym teachers to receive yearly training, school psychologists [especially at the middle and high school levels] should receive such training to assist with helping with determining the impact of such events. School psychologists are experts in identifying difficulties in cognitive functioning which can be impacted by such injuries. The

focus of school teams is to ensure the optimal learning environment for students and to support all students in their efforts to achieve and learn.

Respectfully submitted by Karla N. Vázquez, Psy.S., Certified School Psychologist
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