



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
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Memorandum

To: Athletic Trainers of Massachusetts, Massachusetts Association of School Committees, Massachusetts Association of Secondary School Administrators, Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association, Massachusetts School Nurses Association

From: Lauren A. Smith, MD, MPH, Medical Director
Department of Public Health

Re: Updated guidance regarding sports-related head injury law

Date: October 22, 2010

As you are aware, in order to promote the safety and wellbeing of young athletes in Massachusetts, Governor Patrick signed a law on sports-related head injuries this past July. I am writing to ask for your assistance in disseminating the attached Updated Guidance on this law with your members. We hope that your members will also share it with athletic directors, coaches, and other individuals involved with the implementation of the law. In addition to providing a general summary of the law and what it means for key stakeholders, including your members, this Updated Guidance further clarifies an important aspect of the law concerning returning athletes to play.

The new law, Chapter 166 of the Acts of 2010, clearly states that students who become unconscious, who suffer a concussion, or who are *suspected* of having suffered a concussion may not return to the competition or practice where the injury occurred. In addition, the new law states that the injured student may not engage in any extracurricular athletic activity without written authorization. Therefore, our guidance, like that of the Centers for Disease Control's *Heads Up: Concussion in Youth Sports* initiative, is: "Keep the athlete out of play the day of the injury and until a health care professional, experienced in evaluating for concussion, says the athlete is symptom-free and it's OK to return to play."

I am sure your organizations are keenly aware of the growing body of scientific literature clearly demonstrating the short and long-term risks of inappropriately treated concussions. Returning a

student to play after a known or suspected concussion places the student at risk for long term health consequences, including serious injury or even death. This sound medical guidance has been summarized in several international clinical conferences on concussions and most recently by the Centers for Disease Control.

We look forward to working collaboratively with your organizations as the health and safety of student athletes in the Commonwealth is the foremost concern for all of us. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at (617) 624-5200. Thank you again for your assistance with this important matter.