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VERMONT CONCUSSION LAW

What is Act 58 (Sections 39-41) of S.100 and what does it require an Administrator to do?

Act 58 of 2011 is a new Vermont Law (16 V.S.A *1431) that went into effect on July 1, 2011 and requires all schools (K – 12) to educate their coaches, youth athletes and the athletes parents/guardians regarding the prevention and treatment of concussion – related injuries.

This law requires that the Principal/Headmaster of each public and approved independent school in the state shall ensure that:

- a) information concerning the prevention and treatment of concussion – related injuries be provided annually to each student athlete and the athlete's parents/guardians. Each athlete and parent/guardian must sign a form acknowledging receipt of the information and return it to the school prior to the athlete's participation in practice or competitions.
- b) every coach of a school athletic team will receive training no less frequently than every two years on how to recognize the symptoms of a concussion or other head injury. Coaches must receive this training prior to the beginning of his/her sports season.
- c) a coach shall not permit a youth athlete to train or compete with a school athletic team if the athlete has been removed or prohibited from participating in a practice or game due to symptoms of a head injury until the athlete has been examined and the school receives written permission from a health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and other head injuries.

These requirements are only applicable to school sponsored teams. Act 58 is not applicable to summer league teams or recreation departments that may use school facilities.

What resources are available to me?

Resources are available to schools through the Vermont Principals' Association, the Vermont Department of Education, the Vermont Department of Health, the Fletcher Allen Concussion Taskforce, the National Federation for State High School Associations (NFHS) and the U.S. Government Center for Disease Control (CDC). Specific information is available at the web sites of all of these organizations.

However, the first step you may wish to take would be to contact the Athletic Director of your local public or independent school to see how they may be able to help you. The VPA mandated that all high school coaches receive training in concussion education in November 2010. As a result, all high school coaches have now completed this requirement and your local Athletic Director will be able to show you how this can be done for all of your coaches in grades K - 12. In addition, many high schools currently have concussion information (including return to play protocols) on their web sites and have been working on developing parent/guardian sign-off forms and packets of information. Rather than trying to re-invent the wheel, you may find that your local high school Athletic Director already has a lot of the information in place that you will need.

Listed below is some specific information that you can utilize.

- 1) Coaches education training – there are two videos that we recommend. Both of them are free and can be done on-line. They are approximately 25 minutes in length.
 - a) National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) “Concussion in Sports: What You Need to Know” (www.nfhslearn.com). This is a 25 minute video that all high school coaches in Vermont are required to complete. You are required to register as a coach (there is no cost) and schools can actually get a group of registrations for their coaches (again, there is no cost and this allows a school to track their coaches). At the end of the video, a certificate is provided to the coach which can be used as verification.
 - b) U.S. Government Center For Disease Control (CDC) “Heads Up” (http://cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/online_training.html). This is a 25 minute free course provided by the CDC. There is no documentation following the completion of this course so schools would need to develop a system that would provide adequate documentation.
- 2) Information on Concussions – the primary resource for information on concussions is the Center for Disease Control (CDC). The CDC link www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/youth.html takes you to a page (Injury Prevention and Control: Traumatic Brain Injury – Heads Up: Concussion in Youth Sports) which contains information and resources for coaches, athletes and parents/guardians. These resources are free and can be down loaded . The link to this web site is also on the VPA web site under Sports Medicine Information.
- 3) Return to Play Protocol - a key component of concussion treatment is the implementation of an appropriate return to play protocol. Act 58 gives a very broad definition of who can certify an athlete is ready to return to athletic activity and the VPA and its Sports Medicine Advisory Committee is very concerned that an appropriate protocol be put in place and followed when dealing with a concussion or any other head injury.

The Fletcher Allen Concussion Taskforce has developed a return to play protocol that was sent to all schools last year. This protocol is endorsed by the VPA Sports Medicine Advisory Committee and it can be found on the VPA web site under Sports Medicine Information.

Information on concussions and how to treat it is changing on almost a monthly basis. Hopefully the information listed above will assist you in implementing this law this year. If you need further assistance please feel free to call the VPA at any time.