WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §18-2-25a

§18-2-25a. Management of concussions and head injuries in athletics at West Virginia Secondary School Activities Commission member high school or middle school.

(a) The Legislature makes the following findings:

(1) Concussions are one of the most commonly reported injuries in children and adolescents who participate in sports and recreational activities. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that as many as 3.9 million sports-related and recreation-related concussions occur in the United States each year;

(2) A concussion is caused by a blow or motion to the head or body that causes the brain to move rapidly inside the skull. The risk of catastrophic injuries or death is significant when a concussion or head injury is not properly evaluated and managed;

(3) Concussions are a type of brain injury that can range from mild to severe and can disrupt the way the brain normally functions;

(4) Concussions can occur in any organized or unorganized sport or recreational activity and can result from a fall or from players colliding with each other or with obstacles;

(5) Concussions occur with or without loss of consciousness, but the vast majority occur without loss of consciousness;

(6) The interscholastic athlete who continues to play or practice with a concussion or symptoms of head injury is especially vulnerable to greater injury and even death; and

(7) Even with generally recognized return-to-play-and-practice standards for concussion and head injury, some affected interscholastic athletes are prematurely returned to play or practice resulting in increased risk of physical injury or death to the athletes in the state of West Virginia.

(b) For the purposes of this section, "interscholastic athlete" means any athlete who is participating in interscholastic athletics at a high school or middle school that is a member of the West Virginia Secondary School Activities Commission. "Licensed health care professional" means a health care provider whose licensed scope of practice includes the ability to diagnose and treat an injury or disease.

(c) The West Virginia Secondary School Activities Commission shall promulgate rules pursuant to §18-2-25 of this code that address concussions and head injuries in interscholastic athletes: Provided, That prior to state board approval and notwithstanding the exemption provided in §29A-1-3 of this code, the state board shall submit the rule to the Legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability pursuant to §29A-3B-9 of this

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code.

(d) The rules required by this section shall include, but are not limited to, the following:

(1) Guidelines and other pertinent information to inform and educate appropriate school administrators, coaches, interscholastic athletes, and their parents or guardians of the nature and risk of concussion and head injury including the risks of continuing to play or practice after a concussion or head injury;

(2) A concussion and head injury information sheet that shall be signed and returned by the interscholastic athlete and the athlete's parent or guardian on an annual basis before the interscholastic athlete begins practice or competition;

(3) A requirement that each head coach of an interscholastic sport at a high school or middle school who is a member of the West Virginia Secondary School Activities Commission complete a commission-approved concussion and head injury recognition and return-to-play protocol course annually;

(4) A requirement that an interscholastic athlete who is suspected by a licensed health care professional or by his or her head coach or licensed or registered athletic trainer of having sustained a concussion or head injury in a practice or game shall be removed from competition at that time;

(5) A requirement that an interscholastic athlete who has been removed from play or practice may not return to play or practice until the athlete is evaluated by a licensed health care professional trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and receives written clearance to return to play and practice from the licensed health care professional;

(6) A list of the respective categories of licensed health care professionals including, but not limited to, licensed physical therapists and licensed or registered athletic trainers who, if properly trained in the evaluation and management of concussions, are authorized to provide written clearance for the interscholastic athlete to return to play; and

(7) A requirement that all member schools must submit a report to the West Virginia Secondary School Activities Commission within 30 days of an interscholastic athlete suffering or being suspected of suffering a concussion or head injury in a practice or game. The report must state whether an evaluation by a licensed health care professional verified that a concussion or head injury was actually suffered, whether the athlete received written clearance to return to play or practice and, if written clearance was given, the number of days between the incident and the actual return to play or practice. If written clearance to return to play is given after 30 days of the incident, a report update shall be submitted. The West Virginia Secondary School Activities Commission shall compile and submit the reports to the appropriate state and national organization or agencies to analyze and make determinations on whether the rule required by this section needs to be amended or if equipment worn by interscholastic athletes needs to be changed accordingly. The West

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Virginia School Activities Commission also shall submit the reports to the Legislative Oversight Commission on Health and Human Resources Accountability.

(e) Any member school not complying with the requirements of this section, and rules promulgated thereof, shall be subject to the disciplinary actions ordered by the West Virginia Secondary School Activities Commission: Provided, That the West Virginia Secondary School Activities Commission shall promulgate rules to establish guidelines for noncompliance and related disciplinary actions: Provided, however, That prior to state board approval and notwithstanding the exemption provided in §29A-1-3 of this code, the state board shall submit the rule to the Legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability pursuant to §29A-3B-9 of this code.

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