

Lawrence Academy Concussion Protocol

Introduction

A growing body of scientific literature demonstrates the short- and long-term risks of concussions. Returning a student to physical or cognitive activity after a known or suspected concussion places the student at risk for long-term health consequences. The risk of substantial injury is particularly high if the student suffers a subsequent concussion before completely recovering from the prior one. This can lead to prolonged recovery, or even to severe brain swelling (second impact syndrome) with devastating and even fatal consequences.

Lawrence Academy seeks to prevent concussions and provide a safe return to academics and athletics for all students after an injury, particularly after a head injury, and thus will follow guidelines established by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the National Athletic Trainers' Association Position Statement on Management of Sport-Related Concussion. The following procedures have therefore been developed to aid in ensuring that concussed students are identified, treated, and referred appropriately; receive appropriate follow-up medical care, including academic accommodations; and are completely recovered prior to returning to full participation in both the academic and athletic programs at Lawrence Academy.

Persons responsible for implementation of policy and procedures

Lawrence Academy has designated the Director of Health Services to oversee the implementation of policies and protocols governing the prevention and management of head injuries. In addition, they will be responsible for:

- (1) Supporting and enforcing the protocols, documentation, required training and reporting.
- (2) Assuring that all documentation is in place.
- (3) Reviewing, updating, and implementing policy as current knowledge dictates and including updates in training and student and parent handbooks.

Training requirement

Lawrence Academy provides annual safety training on sports-related concussion, including second impact syndrome, for certified athletic trainers, school nurses, school physicians, administrators, faculty, and coaches. Alternatively, staff may complete free, on-line training (either the National Federation of High Schools or the CDC's Heads up Concussion training). Throughout the year, the athletic trainer works with the equipment manager and coaches to ensure that equipment fits properly, discusses best practices in their sport, including dangerous play thus reducing the likelihood of athletic injury. It is strongly recommended that students who participate in athletic activities and their parents or legal guardians complete the annual training referenced in their Magnus consent forms.

Documentation of physical examination

Each student athlete must have a physical examination on an annual basis, i.e. within 13 months of the student's last physical examination (to allow for insurance coverage of the examination). Any student who does not have a current physical on file with the school nurse, prior to the first day of try-outs/practice, may not participate until a new or updated physical is turned in. If the student's physical examination expires during the sports season, he/she must have an updated physical examination to continue to participate in sports. All health forms are available on parent portal in the health forms tab.

Pre-participation head injury reporting and review

The Massachusetts concussion law requires athletes and their parents to inform coaches about prior head injuries at the beginning of each sports season. This reporting is done prior to fall sports via the Health History forms and updated throughout the year as necessary. Students may not participate in any sports activity at Lawrence Academy until the Health History form is completed and returned to school prior to the start of fall term.

Current evidence indicates that youth who have suffered one or more concussions are more likely to suffer a subsequent one. Lawrence Academy will always focus on protecting the health and safety of the student to avoid long-term consequences that can occur from repeated concussions. Therefore, the decision to allow athletic participation for a student who has a history of multiple concussions will be made only after consultation with the student's primary care provider or concussion specialist, school physician, athletic trainer, and the parent. After review of the Health History forms, the school Health Center staff will communicate any concerns to the head athletic trainer and athletic director and follow up with parents and students as needed prior to the student's participation in athletic activities.

Reporting and review of incidents of head injury during the school year

Collaboration and sharing of this information are crucial to management and coordination of student's care after a head injury. Lawrence Academy therefore requires that coaches and other personnel report any head injury immediately to the athletic trainer and/or Health Center staff. Parents of students who sustain a head injury outside of school related activities are required to inform the athletic trainer and/or Health Center staff. Parents are made aware of this responsibility through the school health forms and consents annually.

Concussion Evaluation - Removing athletes from play and subsequent evaluation

At Lawrence Academy we are committed to providing a safe environment for our students. It is expected that all members of school staff adhere to the following to support the health and safety of students. The underlying philosophy of these policies is "when in doubt, sit them out."

Any student who receives a blow to the head and/or exhibits any signs or symptoms of concussion must be removed immediately from play/practice. He/she will be evaluated by the athletic trainer who will initiate care as necessary.

The student will need to be evaluated by his/her PCP or school physician, or potentially receive urgent care in an Emergency Room if signs and symptoms warrant. When a student loses consciousness for any reason, EMS will be activated. Athletes who are removed from play or practice and who begin to develop signs and symptoms of a worsening brain injury will be transported to the ER immediately.

Parents of day students who are symptomatic but stable will be contacted by the athletic trainer or Health Center staff and are expected to take responsibility for their children immediately. The athletic trainer or Health Center staff will communicate their findings with the parents and advise follow-up with the primary care provider. The parents will receive important information regarding signs and symptoms of deteriorating brain injury/ function prompting immediate referral to a local emergency room as well as return to play and academic requirements at the school.

Parents of boarding students who are symptomatic and stable will be notified of the injury by the athletic trainer or Health Center staff and plans for further evaluation will be made.

While a student is away from school due to a suspected concussion they should rest and follow the instructions of their medical provider. The athletic trainer or Health Center staff will notify the attendance office, the student's advisor, teachers, coach and the academic office of the injury and the students' need for evaluation and rest.

Returning to Campus and Academics after Concussion Diagnosis

A student will be allowed to return to school/dorm and attend classes when cleared in writing by a medical provider to do so. The student must meet with Health Center staff upon return so that the accommodations can be communicated to the academic office and teachers. The Health Center staff will monitor that student daily until cleared of academic accommodations and will maintain communication with all necessary teachers/staff of progression via a daily email. During this time of gradual return to academic, the student may not participate in athletic activities. Students will be encouraged to meet with the academic office to help modify their academic work during this recovery period.

Return to full academic participation:

Once the student is cleared by their treating medical provider to resume a full academic program, the health office will send an email to the attendance office, the student's advisor, teachers, coach and the academic office and athletic trainers regarding the student's updated status. The student will work with their teachers and the academic office on a plan to make up missed work. The student must also check in at this time with the athletic training staff regarding a timetable to begin the athletic RTP plan when cleared by the treating physician.

Returning to Athletic Activities after Concussion Diagnosis

If it is determined that an athlete has a concussion they will be out of competition until he/she is cleared for participation by a physician. No player shall go from being sidelined with a concussion to activity until he/she has followed the recommended stepwise process to return to activity from the treating physician, as recommended by the National Athletic Trainers' Association Position Statement on Management of Sport-Related Concussion in addition to Massachusetts State Regulations.

In addition to written medical clearance by the treating provider, three other criteria must be met prior to clearance for return to play in athletics:

1. the student-athlete must be asymptomatic, at rest and with exertion, (unless dictated differently per the concussion specialist), and
2. The student must complete a Return to Play (RTP) plan (see below)
3. the student's post-injury neurocognitive testing data must be within normal range of the student's baseline neurocognitive testing scores, if available. Lawrence Academy currently utilizes SWAY testing for pre and post injury assessment of concussion.

Post-concussion graduated reentry-Physical Activity The "Return to Play" protocol

Return to Play plans must be completed under the supervision of a certified professional such as an athletic trainer and will begin only after a student has returned to full participation in academics, is cleared to begin a Return to Play protocol, and is completely symptom-free at rest, unless dictated otherwise by the treating provider. Progression to the next phase will require the student to be symptom free for 24 hours unless dictated by the treating provider. If symptoms do develop the student must drop back to the previous step. Example below:

- No activity: Complete physical and cognitive rest; no exercise or school. No computer, texting, video games, etc.
- Light aerobic exercise: Walking, swimming, stationary bike. Heart rate < 70% of max. No resistance training.
(Post concussion cognitive testing (SWAY) must be at baseline to progress.)
- Sport-specific training: Skating in hockey, running in soccer, etc. No contact.
- Non-contact drills: Passing drills, dribbling. May start resistance training.
- Full-contact practice: Normal practice participation.
- Game play.

It is impossible to predict how long recovery will take following a concussion. Factors that may affect the rate of progression include previous history of concussion, duration and type of symptoms, age of the athlete, and sport/activity in which the athlete participates. An athlete with a prior history of concussion, one who has had an extended duration of symptoms, or one who is participating in a collision or contact sport should progress more slowly.

Students should only progress to the next level of exertion if they are asymptomatic at the current level or unless dictated differently by a concussion specialist. In a situation

in which a student has been medically cleared but the advisor and/or other staff members have observed continuing or increased symptoms, Lawrence Academy's health care professionals will make the final decision regarding a student's return to play in consultation with the school-affiliated concussion specialist. If this situation arises, the athletic trainer, school nurse, or school physician will communicate the school's concerns to the health care provider who gave the clearance. The Lawrence Academy health care professionals will make the final decision, in consultation with the school-affiliated concussion specialist, regarding a student's return to activity. Students may be required to follow-up with a concussion specialist if requested by the school medical staff.