

AF Providence High School
Athletics Handbook 2025-26



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* Items in this Handbook are subject to change/review.

Eligibility of Student-Athletes

All teams are governed by the eligibility rules implemented by the Rhode Island Interscholastic League, **Rules and Regulations** (article 3). Parents, students, and coaches should familiarize themselves with this rule book: found at www.riil.org.

Eligibility for student-athletes at AF Providence High School is stated as follows:

Eligibility for Team

- Must have valid physical within last 12 months on file with school nurse.
- Passing 60% of academic course load at any given time.
 - The easiest way to think about this is if you are taking 5 courses in a semester, you must be passing at least 3 of them to be eligible. If you are taking 6 courses, you must be passing 4 of them to maintain eligibility.
- If at the end of a quarterly marking period a student does not meet that 60% threshold, they will be ineligible until the next marking period.
 - Fall Sports - Prior year Quarter 4 grades
 - Winter Sports - Quarter 1 grades
 - Spring Sports- Quarter 2 grades
- Filled out Assumption of Risk form on file with the school (once in 4 years)
- Completed Online Registration

Eligibility for Competition

- Student-athletes **MUST** maintain a passing grade in 60% of classes during the season.
- Student-athletes are required to be in 100% compliance of dress code every day by 8:45AM. Student-athletes not in dress code may be pulled out of practice, games, or competitions on days they are not compliant with dress code.

Parents, guardians, and student-athletes are expected to review and refer to the rules in the *AF Providence High Athletics Handbook* to ensure the eligibility of the student-athletes.

Special attention should be given to the following items:

- A student-athlete is required to attend school the day of an athletic contest, event, or practice.
- In order to be eligible for a practice or contest, the student must be in school by the start of 2nd period unless approved by the Principal and Athletic Director.

- A student-athlete should not be absent from school the day following an athletic contest. A student-athlete that is absent from school the day of contest or after contest should have a valid excuse written by a parent or guardian and acceptable according to the Principal or Athletic Director.
 - It should be noted that each sport's coach may also include provisions around the day before an athletic contest as a factor in ability to safely participate as well.
- Behavior in school, on the playing or practice field/court or public unbecoming of a student-athlete at AF Providence High School could result in temporary suspension or permanent removal of athletic privileges and team participation.
- **Extracurricular Activity Suspension:** Any AFPHS student with a violation, or repeated violations, of the rules and regulations stated in the *AF Providence High School Student Handbook* may be subject to suspension from attendance and/or participation in any extracurricular (social, arts, clubs, athletics) activities for a period of time determined by the Leadership Team and Athletic Administration.
- During any suspension, a student is not allowed to participate in any school-related activities (including vacation periods and weekends) until the suspension period is completed. A suspension ends at midnight on the final day of the period.
- Any students transferring to Providence High School or transferring from Providence High School need to follow the RIIL Transfer Management system process and all RIIL policies that can be found on RIIL.org or by contacting the RIIL Office.

Student Athlete Guidelines and Expectations

Every student-athlete as well as their parents/guardians are required to read the *AF Providence High Athletics Handbook*, and **sign the acceptance of it**.

Parents or guardians and student-athletes must read and sign the *Rhode Island Interscholastic League's Assumption of Risk Form* one time during a student-athlete's 4 years of high school.

Any student-athlete ejected from a game will be subject to the penalties imposed by the RIIL. Whatever that penalty is will **be matched** by AF Providence High School, and possibly added onto until reparations have been made. This is in accordance with athletic participation being a privilege afforded to students at AFPHS.

Alcohol/Drug Use

Any student-athlete who presents themselves in an unethical or immoral manner in school, competition, community, social media, or the internet is subject to suspension or dismissal from the athletic program or a specific team. If an AF Providence High student-athlete is shown to be in the presence of alcohol or any controlled substances in any medium (photo, video, etc.), they are subject to the same sections.

The use of alcohol, controlled substances, or steroids will result in suspension or dismissal from the athletic program. It is the responsibility of the parent(s) or guardian(s) to provide treatment for the student-athlete. Student-athletes are considered in violation of this policy if they possess, are illegally in the presence of, consume (including being under the influence of) and/or distribute, other than as prescribed by a physician for personal use, any tobacco product, controlled drug and/or intoxicant, or steroid at any time. This violation will be enforced whether during the school day, at any school sanctioned activity, on school property, or at locations off school property.

Players will attend practice in proper attire as indicated by the team's coach. All student-athletes should be wearing appropriate practice attire and equipment to ensure safety.

Each athlete is responsible for the security of their own equipment and uniform. If any piece of issued equipment or uniform is lost, the player and family are responsible for restitution. The athlete will not be allowed to compete in any other activities until resolved.

No equipment or uniforms should ever be left on the field or court.

Any student-athlete who is deemed disrespectful to a member of the coaching staff or a game official, will be subject to suspension or dismissal from the athletic program.

Any student-athlete caught stealing or vandalizing school property, or that of another school, will be dismissed from the athletic program.

Every student-athlete is subject to AFPHS's behavioral policies.

The team's Head Coach and Athletic Director should be notified of all injuries. In particular, all injuries which require medical attention.

Injured players should attend practice. As considered a member of the team, they should be at practice, contributing in whatever way possible. In the event an injured player is unable to attend (receiving medical treatment), the approval of the head coach is required.

These guidelines should be saved and referred to throughout the year. If there is a question about a student's participation you should contact Danyelle Delves at danyelledelves@achievementfirst.org

Progress Reports

Student-athletes at AF Providence High School may be required to complete a weekly progress report throughout their season(s). A weekly report will be pulled by the Athletics Committee and Leadership Team, to determine a student-athlete's eligibility for games/competitions. Student-athletes who fail the weekly progress report, will be deemed academically ineligible for all games/competitions until they meet their eligibility requirements.

Academically Ineligible means a student athlete will be limited in dressing playing or performing in games competitions or team events. academically ineligible student athletes are allowed to participate in practice as long as behavior and social norms are being met.

Passing a progress report means that a student athlete will remain academically eligible for their sport meaningful participation in games practices competitions Etc.

Please see below for how student-athletes can pass or fail a progress report:

Pass	Fail
Passing 4/6 classes	Failing more than 2 classes (F)
Maximum of 2 classes below D- (F)	Behavior that is unbecoming of a PHS student-athlete
Positively represents team and Athletic Dept.	

*All of the requirements in the *Pass* section must be met for a student to pass their progress report and remain academically eligible.

*If any of the items in the *Fail* section are true, a student-athlete will be **academically ineligible** until all requirements in the *Pass* section are met.

*Behavior concerns will be handled on a case by case basis and is at the discretion of the Leadership Team and Athletic Director.

Expectations of Parents/Guardians of AF Providence High School Student-Athletes

AF Providence High School suggests parents and/or guardians of our student-athletes to model positive support, care, encouragement, and sportsmanship to the student-athletes and their teams, coaches, school, and opponents.

In order to create such habits, AF Providence High School recommends that all parents and or guardians take the free course provided by the National Federation of High Schools called positive sport parenting. the course can be found at www.nfhslearn.com/courses/positive-sport-parenting

The course is free and available to anyone.

If it is brought to the attention of the AF Providence High School leadership team and or athletic committee that a parent or Guardian acted inappropriately or in a way that negatively reflects our school at athletic contest we can mandate that the parent take the course and provide the certificate of completion before said parent is allowed to attend another school event. if they refuse the student athlete may be held out of all competitions until the parent or Guardian has completed the course.

In the case of a parent or guardian who has been ejected from any athletic venue, our school will mandate that the parent or guardian complete the positive sport parenting course before they are allowed to attend any future athletic events.

AF Providence High believes it is important to create and Foster an environment of healthy competition and needs parents and/or Guardians help to do so.

Healthful Tips:

Provide positive support care and encouragement to all student athletes their teams coaches and school.

Respect to the position, professionalism and decisions of game officials whether you agree or disagree with them.

Refrain from the use of foul language. Refrain from yelling criticism at ANY student athlete their coaches and team.

Cheer positively to support, not negatively to bring down.

Procedure fo Athletic Complaints

All coaches, student-athletes, and parent/guardians are expected to read and follow the guidelines below. Differences of opinions and methods occur in all instances of life; athletics is no exception. In order to create an environment where reasonable expression of differences can be heard and discussed, the following procedures have been put in place to establish a line of communication between all stakeholders.

AFPHS Athletic Staff, student-athletes, and parent/guardians are responsible for following these procedures.

Here are the guidelines to help foster successful problem-solving:

1. No conflict between a parent, student-athlete, official or coach should be addressed during or immediately following a game, competition, or practice. The game sites, practice field, lobby, or locker rooms are not appropriate places to handle conflict or disagreement. Emotions can run high during interscholastic athletics. It is a requirement that ALL take time to reflect and think before discussing.
2. Coaches are NOT to meet or deal with conflict at these times or places.
Coaches have full authority to say "I am not able to speak with you at this time, please set up a meeting with school leadership.
3. If a parent/guardian has an inquiry, they should email an athletic administrator the following day, to discuss the concern and arrange a meeting. Playing time will not be a topic that is discussed.
4. AFPHS requires that all stakeholders respect the decisions of the coaches and officials during contests and practices. Our school and athletic programs understand that anyone may disagree with decisions made; however, in order to teach sportsmanship and fair play, we need ALL adults and guests to be visible role models.

Procedures to be followed for problem solving:

1. As we are fostering leadership and independence in our student-athletes - if an issue arises, the student needs to set up a meeting to discuss with their coach. This should be the first step in any conflict.
2. If the conflict is not resolved at this level, the coach, student, or adult supporter may request the meeting. This should be done through the Athletic Director who will keep proper records of the meeting.
3. If the conflict is still unresolved, the AD will inform the Leadership Team and work together to make decisions moving forward.

Registering the Student-Athlete for Participation

Student-Athletes will complete registration on the Athletics Registration Website which can be found on the school website.

Prospective student-athletes must be registered and fully eligible to participate.

While registering - students and families will be sent this handbook with an agreement to be signed.

Students will also be required to complete the RIIL Assumption of Risk Form. Copies can be found at riil.org as well as in the PHS Athletics Office. This is to be done one time in 4 years of high school.

Students also need to have a valid physical on file with the school within the last 12 months to participate.

Once a student is registered, has signed the handbook agreement, has filed the Assumption of Risk form, and has a valid physical on file, they are allowed to participate. If ANY of these requirements are not met, the student will not be allowed to participate until it is rectified.

TRYOUTS

Depending on the sport, students may be subject to a mandatory tryout for a sport. Students may not be selected to be a member of the team; as such AFPHS is not responsible or required to handle parent/guardian phone calls or complaints pertaining to tryouts, tryout process, or team selections. Cuts and team selections are non-negotiable and not a valid reason to contact AFPHS.

For 'cut-sports' coaches will use an evaluative selection process. Coaches have clear criteria and performance indicators that are requirements to be successful in the sport. Some sports may have sub-varsity teams when appropriate, these levels are subject to the tryout process.

Attendance at all tryouts for cut-sports is mandatory; student-athletes unable to attend any trout sessions MUST notify the Head Coach and Athletic Director prior to their absence.

PAY TO PLAY POLICY

AFPHS will institute a pay to play policy for the 2024-25 school year for all student-athletes on all teams for every season. This is a policy that will be re-evaluated on a yearly basis. The reason for pay to play policy is that sports are not a requirement, but a privilege, and new programs (which all are due to the founding nature of our school) are very expensive.

The fees will be used differently in every sport as each sport has different requirements, needs, and expenses. Please be assured that the fee will be supporting your student in their designated sport.

Examples of expenses that pay to play fees cover: student rental of uniforms and equipment, gym/field rentals, equipment rentals, transportation expenses, purchasing equipment, facility rentals for practices and games.

Some sports may require students to purchase equipment and or uniforms, and equipment items that are size specific. These will be additional to the pay to play fee.

The pay to play fee collection is season and sport specific. This means that if a student plays a fall sport and a winter sport, they will be subject to separate fees for each season.

The fee is non-refundable. If a student is dismissed from the athletic program or quits, these fees will not be refunded.

The fee for the 2024-25 school year will be \$60.00 per athlete per season.

Student-athletes will have a 2 week grace period upon being named to a team to fulfill their pay to play obligation. After that point they will not be allowed to participate in any practice or game

until the fee is paid in full. That grace period covers practices and team meetings but NOT OFFICIAL ATHLETIC COMPETITIONS.

Families will receive an invoice on the ParentSquare App, the outstanding balance will go on the student's account.

Payments can be made:

- 1- directly on Parent-Square
2. Cash or check brought to main office or Athletic office. Checks can be made out to AF Providence High School.

TRANSPORTATION POLICY

AFPHS will NOT provide transportation to any practices, games, competitions, etc. unless deemed so by the A.D. Students and families are responsible for transportation to and from all practices, games, competitions, etc. and students are responsible for ensuring that they attend every practice, game, or competition.

Accepting a roster spot on a team means that you are committing to finding transportation to every team event as well as being present and on-time.

Students and families may need to utilize public transportation, ride sharing, carpooling, or altering schedules so that students are able to attend all mandatory team events on time.

AFPHS MAY provide transportation for events that are during the post-season or for a trip that is of lengthy travel time. This will be communicated to students and families in advance.

If a student is repeatedly late or absent to events that student is subject to dismissal from the team.

VACATION POLICY

Student athletes are expected to attend all practices and contests during the season, including practices, games, and contests, during school vacations. If a student-athlete does need to miss a practice or contests they must tell their coach prior to the absence at the earliest possible time.

If a student athlete knows they are going to be away from the team during the season, they should inform the coach before the season begins. This allows the coaches to plan accordingly for the student athlete's absence. **If A student athlete does not tell a Coach that they will be missing during a portion of the season, prior to the season beginning, the student athlete is subject to dismissal from the team.** This is out of respect to the students who could be cut from that team who would have been able to commit completely to that team and season.

If A student athlete is going to miss a period of time with the team for a personal vacation or other plans (medical exemptions), our policy is that student athlete will have to sit out one contest for each contest during their absence missed before being allowed to participate in further competition. example; missed three contests for family vacation = not eligible to participate in the following three contests after returning from vacation. The student athlete will also need to complete as many practices as they missed before returning to competition.

it is imperative that student athletes and families understand that they are making a commitment to a team AND our Athletics program is making a commitment to the student athlete and their family. As such, student athletes and Families should do their best to not plan to be away from their team during the season. This negatively impacts a team and program; issues around fairness playing time and team morale often arrives in these occurrences.

RIIL RULES AND REGULATIONS
Article 7 - Limitation of Season

Section 6. non-school competition and loyalty to school team

- A. definition of school sports season- a school sports season shall be defined as the period beginning with the date of the school's first practice with any part of a sports Squad and ending with the school's last contest, including Division and state tournament contests in that sport.
- B. definition of organized non-school competition- organized non-school competition shall be defined as any game which is sponsored by an individual or organization and for which any of the following have been pre-arranged: coach, officials, scorer, or team membership.
- C. a member of a school team is defined as a student athlete who is listed on a freshman junior varsity or Varsity eligibility list who is regularly present for and or actively participates in all team practices and competitions.
 - 1. Bonafide members of a school team are prevented from missing a practice or competition to compete with an out of school team.
 - 2. if a conflict arises between the high school team practice / competition and an out-of-school practice/competition on the same day, the high school team practice competition must be honored by the student athlete. priority/loyalty must be given at all times to the high school team practice and contests **unless a waiver has been granted by the principal and athletic director on a case-by-case basis.**
 - 3. **student athletes may be a member of and compete for out-of-school teams if the conditions set forth in numbers 1 2 and 3 above are met.**
 - 4. **Penalties:**
 - a. Any student-athlete who is in violation shall be ineligible for the next two consecutive riil League contests in which the student athlete is a participant. this penalty is effective from the date of his or her last participation in a high school Sport and may carry over to the next Sports season in which they participate.
 - b. any student athlete who is found to be in violation of the rule a second time or subsequent times shall be ineligible for participation for the rest of that Sports season. **a student athlete found to be in violation of article 7, section 6c at the end of that Sports season shall be ineligible for the first two riil League contests of the same sport in the following year. If the student athlete has senior eligibility, they shall be ineligible for the first two contests of the next sport in which they participate. In both instances, the student athlete may be declared ineligible for participation in all interscholastic Athletics for his or her school for the remainder of the school year.**
- D. during the Academic Year:
 - 1. the student athlete May participate:
 - a. on a non-school-sponsored team / competition as outlined in C above
 - b. provided prospective members of a high school, club, freshman, junior varsity or varsity team do not comprise in excess of 50% of the active members on the non

school team poor athletes on the High School varsity eligibility list are not comprised of members of the non-school team in excess of 50% of the membership of the non-school team.

This does not include 8th grade students

2. The High School coaches may not coach:
 - a. a prospective members of a high school, club, freshman, junior varsity or varsity team during the off-season of his or her sport.

Exception: coaches may coach students during the offseason who have exhausted their athletic eligibility in their particular sport.

Rhode Island interscholastic League - rules and regulations article 3 eligibility

Section 10. recruitment of student-athletes by private, parochial and public schools

to maintain the educational standards and dignity of our academic and athletic program, all members of the riil must refrain from any practices such as recruitment, enticements, and inducements or other pressure which would encourage students substantially for athletic purposes to leave, enter, or not to enter schools within their normal district, as defined by the Rhode Island Department of education, or schools in which they have enrolled or have indicated in writing the intent to enroll. in order to ensure that the above prohibitions of the riil are carried out, the committee has adopted the following regulations: (note: this also applies to students below grade nine who are contemplating and rolling in an riil member school, public, private or parochial).

policy on recruiting

A. general principles

1. recruiting is the use of undue influence and or special inducement by anyone associated with the school in an attempt to encourage a perspective athlete to attend or remain at that school for the purpose of participating in interscholastic athletics.
2. recruitment of students or attempted recruitment of students for athletic purposes, regardless of their residence, is a gross violation of the bylaws of the RIIL and is expressly forbidden.
3. Member schools are responsible for any violation committed by any person who is under the direct or indirect supervision and control of the principal. member schools are also responsible for any violation committed by a person acting at the direction of any person under the direct supervision or control of the principal.

DUAL SPORT PARTICIPATION IN RIIL SPORTS

On June 15th 2015, the principles committee on Athletics changed their rules concerning the ability of a student to participate in two sports within the same season (fall, winter, spring).

AF Providence High School will allow a student to participate in two sports during the same season under the following conditions:

- The student must declare a primary and secondary sport prior to the season beginning.
- the head coach of the primary Sport and athletic director have the final decision on any participation of the student with the secondary sport. a student must have permission from the head coach of the primary Sport and athletic director in order to practice or compete for the secondary sport, even if there is no conflict with the primary sport.
- if a student tries out for a sport and doesn't make the team they will not be allowed to try out for another team that has already made their selections, and less approved by the athletic director and head coach.
- students who wish to participate in two sports in the same season must declare their intentions with the athletic director.

RHODE ISLAND GENERAL LAWS
TITLE 11

Criminal offenses chapter 11-21

Hazing

section 11-21-1

Penalty for Hazing: any organizer of, or participant in, and activity constituting hazing, as defined in subsection B of this section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, shall be fine not more than \$500, or punished by imprisonment for not less than 30 days nor more than one year, or both.

B. hazing as used in this chapter, means any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person. This conduct shall include, but not be limited to, whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the weather, forced consumption of any food, liquor, beverage, drug, or other substance, or any brutal treatment or forced physical activity which is likely to adversely affect the physical health or safety of the student or any other person, or which subjects the student or other person to extreme mental stress, including extended deprivation of sleep or rest or extended isolation.

hazing, as it is defined in the Rhode Island general laws: hazing is used in this chapter, means any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person. is not allowed and is punishable by dismissal from the athletic program and disciplinary action from the leadership team.

examples of hazing:

during a pending investigation the student athlete and or coach involved is subject to full investigation by the Providence High leadership team, athletic administrator, and the Providence and or Rhode Island State Police Department when necessary. the student athlete and or coach involved may not be eligible to participate in team or school events for the conclusion of the investigation.

it is the responsibility of each coach and athlete to report any cases of hazing to the athletic administrator or the principal.

title 16- education - chapter 16 - 91
school and youth programs concussions Act

section 16-91-3

School District's guidelines to be developed and implemented.

- a. the Department of Education and the Department of Health shall work in concert with the Rhode Island interscholastic League to develop and promulgate guidelines to inform and educate coaches, Youth athletes, and their parents and or Guardians of the nature and risk of concussion and head injury including continuing to play after concussion or head injury. A concussion and head injury information sheet shall be signed and returned by the youth athlete and The Athlete's parents and or Guardian prior to the youth athletes return to practice or competition.
- b. school districts are required to use training materials made available by the United States Center for Disease Control and prevention entitled "heads up: concussion in the high school sports concussion and youth sports" and any updates or amendments there too, or training materials substantively and substantially similar there too. the Department of Education shall post training materials made available by the Center for Disease Control and prevention on its website. All coaches and volunteers involved in a youth sport or activity covered by this chapter must complete a training course and a refresher course annually thereafter in concussions and traumatic brain injuries. training May consist of videos, classes, and any other generally accepted mode and medium of providing information. school districts are encouraged to have School nurses complete a training course in concussions and traumatic brain injuries.
- c. school districts are encouraged to have all student athletes perform Baseline neuropsychological testing, computerized or otherwise. Parents and or Guardians must be provided with information as to the risk of concussion and/or traumatic brain injuries prior to the start of every sport season and they shall sign and acknowledgment as to their receipt of such information.
- d. are youth athlete who is suspected of sustaining concussion or head injury in a practice or game shall be removed from competition at that time.
- e. a youth athlete who has been removed from play may not return to play until the athlete is evaluated by a licensed physician who may consult with an athletic trainer all of whom shall be trained in the evaluation and management of concussions. the athlete must receive written clearance to return to play from that licensed physician.

- f. all school districts are encouraged to have an athletic trainer or similarly trained person at all recreational and athletic events addressed by this statute.

Concussions

National Federation of State High School Associations

- Even though most concussions are mild all concussions are potentially serious and may result in complications that range from prolonged brain damage to death if not managed properly.
- an athlete who has a head injury should not return to play without evaluation by medical personnel.
- do not allow any athlete to return to participation if he or she has any symptoms.
- If an apparent head injury occurs even if uncertainty exists about the severity of the injury and whether a true concussion occurred that athlete should not return to action until medical clearance is obtained.
- even a seemingly mild head injury often referred to as a ding or bell ringer is now considered a true concussion and must be managed such to avoid potential long-term consequences.
- neither loss of consciousness vomiting or Amnesia is necessary for a head injury to be considered a concussion.

Recognition

a concussion by definition means to shake violently. a Blow To The Head that causes the brain to shake inside the skull and result in even a brief and Mild alteration and brain function is considered a concussion. although no obvious signs or symptoms may show up immediately listed below are some of the symptoms that may suggest a concussion has occurred.

Headache	Forgets play responsibilities
Dazed and vacant expression (foggy)	Double vision or blurred vision
Confusion	increase sensitivity to light or noise
difficulty with balance and coordination skills	sleep difficulties
difficulty with concentration memory and organizational skills	increased irritability
nausea and or vomiting	hypersensitivity to light and noise
amnesia	abnormal Vision hearing smell and or taste
slurred and or inappropriate speech	excessive fatigue
repeating the same questions or comments	abnormal sleep pattern
sleep patterns numbness and tingling	ringing in the ears

Significance

the initial recognition and management of concussions are particularly important in high school athletes in preventing two potential complications associated with concussions in this age group colon post concussion syndrome and second impact syndrome. younger athletes may be at increased risk of cerebral swelling after a mild head injury with greater vulnerability for post-concussion symptoms for a longer period of time. proper management should minimize the risk for these catastrophic results.

recognition of concussions

Severity

the severity or seriousness of a concussion is primarily based on how long the symptoms last. the number and severity of symptoms may have some correlation but no specific symptoms are

more likely to help determine severity. restricting mental and physical activity immediately after the concussion seems to correlate with a quicker return to play.

signs and symptoms of concussions

coaches administrators officials parents and athletes need to be aware of the observable signs and reported symptoms of a concussion.

cumulative effects of repeated concussions

a three-year follow-up study shows that athletes having a previous history of at least one concussion or an increased risk for further concussions. as the number of concussions increase so did the risk for future injuries. it has also been shown that repeated concussions have been linked to longer recovery periods. highlighting the importance of making sure athletes are symptom free prior to returning to competition from a previous mhi, research has shown that one in 15 athletes with a concussion have recurring symptoms within 7 to 10 days from the first concussion. because of these findings in the potential for complications resulting from mhis, it is recommended that athletes sustaining more than one concussion should be referred for follow-up evaluation and assessment To determine any residual effects that may preclude participation in contact or Collision Sports. cases of individuals suffering permanent brain damage from multiple concussions have been reported but no consensus on how many concussions are too many or what leads to that permanent damage.

medical clearance to return to participation after head injury

there is unanimous agreement within the medical community that no athlete who has signs and symptoms of post-concussion should be returned to action. there is also unanimity that there is increased risk of significant damage from a concussion for a period of time after a proceeding concussion and from cumulative damage of multiple head injuries. the more concussions and individual has the greater the risk of having additional concussions. the exact period of increased vulnerability or the number of concussions that is too many has not been determined. traditionally Physicians have advised athletes not to return to action until they have been free of symptoms for a minimum of a week. now rather than discuss a length of time to be free of symptoms guidelines suggests using the gradual return to play protocol shown above while monitoring the athlete for symptoms this could be longer or shorter than a week. research, utilizing some of the testing instruments mentioned above is now revealing subtle residual effects of concussion not found by traditional evaluation. these identifiable deficits frequently persist after the obvious signs of concussion are gone and appear to have relevance to whether an athlete can return to action with relative safety.

source: National Federation of State High School associations Sports Medicine handbook - 4th edition.

endorsed by the riil sports medicine advisory committee

post-concussion syndrome

following a concussion athletes may suffer a number of lingering symptoms for varying lengths of time. below are listed some of the more common symptoms that may last for weeks or months. again no athlete with any symptoms related to head injury should even begin the return to play protocol.

- Impaired attention
- concentration and memory deficits
- Dizziness
- Tinnitus (ringing in the ears)
- Fatigue
- Irritab
- visual problem
- neurasthenia, weakness or numbness
- prolonged or recurring headaches especially with exertion

often high school athletes May return to sport prematurely because the headache can mistakenly be seen as a common ailment. however Recent research has shown the athletes with residual headaches even a weak post-concussion do poorly on Specialized tests such as reaction time and memory. it is imperative that even a seemingly non-significant headache not be dismissed as a common ailment prior to returning to sports

second impact syndrome

second impact syndrome is a rare event which poses a significant concern for athletes who return too soon after suffering a previous concussion. second impact syndrome occurs when the second concussion occurs before a previous concussion is completely healed even if both of the injuries were very mild. second impact syndrome is characterized by an auto regulatory dysfunction that causes rapid and fatal brain swelling and can result in death in as little as two to five minutes. it is particularly important to note that virtually all of the second impact syndrome cases that have been reported have occurred in adolescent athletes. the signs of second impact syndrome are as follows

- Previous history of concussion
- visual motor or sensory changes
- difficulty with memory and or thought process
- collapse into coma
- neurological abnormalities and strength range of motion or sensory feelings.

returning the athlete to participation

the International Conference on concussion at Vienna and Prague have significantly changed the thinking of proper management of head injuries in athletes. some of the conclusions are highlighted below.

- The grading systems for concussions previously utilized are no longer considered useful in determining how serious and injury may be or in determining whether an athlete can safely return to play. no symptom or signs including loss of consciousness or Amnesia accurately predict the severity of the injury or help decide when an athlete can return to play
- new guidelines recommend monitoring the course of the symptoms and beginning a gradual return to play protocol when all symptoms of cleared
- there are now objective validated methods of evaluating brain function in athletes to help Physicians determine with greater confidence when an athlete does seem to be clear of symptoms and can start Through The Graduated return to play regiment. these include questionnaires various pencil and paper tests balance tests neurological and memory tasks and computerized tests. recognizing that athletes with the mentality of playing through the pain are not always totally candid about admitting symptoms guidelines now recommend the use of these more objective methods to evaluate how an athlete's brain is functioning. tests requiring little cost like sideline assessment of concussion sideline concussion checklist and Sport concussion assessment tool have been shown to be helpful. newer computerized neuropsychological screening like impact CRI and Sentinel have also been shown to be helpful for Physicians making return to play decisions.
- Guidelines further suggest that athletes playing high risk or Collision sports or with a history of previous concussions should have these tests administered prior to the season to serve as a baseline in any case an injury does occur.
- Mental exertion appears to worsen and prolong concussion symptoms to the same degree as physical exertion. therefore the concept of cognitive rest should be adhered to in concussion management. this may involve a limited class schedule for several days following a concussion or rescheduling tests. more severely concussed the athletes may require more detailed and long-lasting special accommodations.
- the requirement to begin the return to play protocol is that the athlete must have no symptoms. then gradual increase in mental activity is tolerated will be followed by a similar gradual return to full physical activity. if symptoms recur then the athlete must regress to a previous level of performance.

table 8

Sideline decision making	medical clearance RTP protocol
1. no athlete should return to play after head injury even if clear in 15 minutes without medical clearance	1. no exertional activity until asymptomatic 2. when the athlete appears clear begin

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. and any athlete removed from play for a head injury must have appropriate medical clearance before practice or competition May resume. 3. close observation of athlete should continue for a few hours. 4. after medical clearance RTP should follow a stepwise protocol with Provisions for delayed RTP based on return of any signs or symptoms. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> low impact activity such as walking stationary bike Etc 3. initiate aerobic activity fundamental to specific Sports such as skating running Etc 4. begin non-contact Skill Drills specific to sports such as dribbling ground balls batting Etc 5. Then full contact in practice setting 6. if athlete remains without symptoms he or she may return to play.
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- A. athlete must remain asymptomatic to progress to the next level.
- B. if symptoms recur athlete must return to previous level
- C. medical check should occur before contact.

Table 9 return to play

Return to play medical clearance protocol
no mental or physical activity should occur until athlete's symptoms are gone avoid physical exertion but also avoid studying School attendance test taking video games computer use and TV until clear.
When clear begin with short periods of reading focusing and an abbreviated school day is tolerated
when tolerating full day of school attendance begin low impact activity such as walking stationary bike Etc. gradually increase intensity and duration is tolerated
Advanced to aerobic activity fundamental to specific sport such as skating running Etc
Advanced to non-contact Skill Drills sport-specific such as dribbling batting and shooting
full contact in practice setting
if accomplishes all the above without return of signs and symptoms May return to play following final clearance. some athletes especially if multiple previous concussions should consider having a baseline computerized neuropsychological test performed because of the increased risk of concussions in those with previous ones.