

# *Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board*

## PROCEDURAL GUIDELINE

### CONCUSSION

#### OVERVIEW

Concussion is the term for a clinical diagnosis that is made by a medical doctor or a nurse practitioner. The definition of concussion given below is adapted from the definition provided in the concussion protocol in the Ontario Physical Education Safety Guidelines. A concussion:

- is a brain injury that causes changes in the way in which the brain functions and that can lead to symptoms that can be physical (e.g., headache, dizziness), cognitive (e.g., difficulty in concentrating or remembering), emotional/behavioural (e.g., depression, irritability), and/or related to sleep (e.g., drowsiness, difficulty in falling asleep);
- may be caused either by a direct blow to the head, face, or neck or by a blow to the body that transmits a force to the head that causes the brain to move rapidly within the skull;
- can occur even if there has been no loss of consciousness (in fact most concussions occur without a loss of consciousness);
- cannot normally be seen by means of medical imaging tests, such as X-rays, standard computed tomography (CT) scans, or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans

It should also be noted that if an individual suffers a second concussion before he or she is free from symptoms sustained from the first concussion, this may lead to “second impact syndrome,” a rare condition that causes rapid and severe brain swelling and often has catastrophic results. Concussions can only be diagnosed by a medical doctor or a nurse practitioner.

#### ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Concussion prevention and management requires the cooperation of all partners in the school community. To ensure the safety of students while they enjoy the many benefits of being active, parents/guardians, students, volunteers, staff, and school boards must all understand and fulfill their responsibilities. It is critical to a student’s recovery that Return to Learning/Return to Physical Activity Plans be developed through a collaborative team approach led by the school principal. This team may include the concussed student, his/her parents/guardians, school staff and volunteers who work with the student, and the medical doctor/medical practitioner. Ongoing communication and monitoring by all members of the team is essential for the successful recovery of the student. Further to the concussion policy, the board outlines the following roles and responsibilities:

## THE SCHOOL BOARD

The school board is expected to communicate, on an annual basis, its policy and procedural guidelines on concussion prevention and management to parents, school board staff, and others in the school community who are in direct contact with students. Within the following components, the school board will:

### Concussion Awareness Strategies and Training:

- Ensure that the approved Concussion Awareness Resources (Appendices A, B & C) are made available, through letters or emails, in a student handbook, and/or on the board website, to students, parents, school and school board staff, volunteers, Indigenous communities, partners and organizations, organizations that use school facilities such as community sport organizations and licensed child-care providers operating in the school board's schools, as well as relevant community-based organizations;
- Ensure that confirmation is received from each of the following individuals, that an approved Concussion Awareness Resource was reviewed every school year prior to participation in board-sponsored interschool sports:
  - Students participating in board-sponsored interschool sports;
  - Parents of students under 18 years of age who are participating in board-sponsored interschool sports;
  - Coaches, team trainers, and officials participating in board-sponsored interschool sports.
- Receive confirmation that annual concussion training is provided to school staff about the contents of Policy 7008 and its procedural guidelines, using Opeha's Concussion E-Learning Module;
- Ensure that concussion related curriculum is taught in each school, using the revised Health and Physical Education Curriculum Grades 1-8;
- Ensure that Rowan's Law Day, which occurs on the last Wednesday in September, is recognized in every school through an awareness event.

### Concussion Codes of Conduct:

- Establish Concussion Codes of Conduct (Appendices D & E) for those participating in board-sponsored interschool sports, including: students, parents of students under 18 years of age, coaches and team trainers;
- Ensure that the Concussion Codes of Conduct are available, through letters or emails, in a student handbook, and/or on the board website, to students, parents, school and school board staff, volunteers, Indigenous communities, partners and organizations, organizations that use school facilities such as community sport organizations and licensed child-care providers operating in the school board's schools, as well as relevant community-based organizations;
- Ensure that schools receive confirmation from each of the following individuals, that the relevant Concussion Code of Conduct was reviewed every school year prior to the participation in board-sponsored interschool sports:
  - Students participating in board-sponsored interschool sports;
  - Parents of students under 18 years of age who are participating in board-sponsored interschool sports;
  - Coaches and team trainers participating in board-sponsored interschool sports.

#### Identification of a Suspected Concussion:

- Ensure that all students, parents of students under the age of 18, board staff (including volunteers) involved in physical activity education and supervision (includes but not limited to: recess supervision, curricular, interschool, and intramural physical activity, before and after school care), are trained to recognize signs and symptoms of a suspected concussion and what immediate action to take, based on the OPHEA concussion protocol (Appendices F,G,H,I,J & K);
- Determine and communicate the process for advising the student with a suspected concussion (Appendix G), or student's parent if the student is under the age of 18, to undergo a medical assessment by a physician or a nurse practitioner to confirm a diagnosis (Appendix L).

#### Return to School Plan:

- Establish a Return to School Plan (Appendices M,N,O,P & Q) to support a return to learning and a return to physical activity, for use when a student has been diagnosed with a concussion, regardless of whether the concussion was sustained at school or elsewhere;
- For a student who is recovering from a concussion and is experiencing long-term difficulties that effect their learning, the board will follow established processes for meeting the student's ongoing learning needs (e.g., accommodations or modifications on an IEP).

#### Concussion Tracking:

- Develop a concussion tracking tool (Appendix O) for schools to use to document and track a concussed student's progress, from removal to an activity due to a suspected concussion, to their return, through graduated steps, to learning and physical activity.

### **PRINCIPAL, VICE-PRINCIPAL OR DESIGNATE**

Within the following components, the principal, vice-principal or designate will:

#### Concussion Awareness Strategies and Training:

- Make the approved Concussion Awareness Resources (Appendices A, B, & C) available, through letters or emails, in a student handbook and/or on the board's website, to students, parents, school and school board staff, and volunteers;
- Receive confirmation from each of the following individuals, that an approved Concussion Awareness Resource was reviewed every school year prior to participation in board-sponsored interschool sports:
  - Students participating in board-sponsored interschool sports;
  - Parents of students under 18 years of age who are participating in board-sponsored interschool sports;
  - Coaches, team trainers, and officials participating in board-sponsored interschool sports.
- Provide annual concussion training to school staff about the contents of the Policy 7008 and its procedural guideline, using Ophea's Concussion E-Learning Module and send confirmation of this training to their school superintendent;
- Ensure that concussion related curriculum is taught in their school, using the revised Health and Physical Education Curriculum Grades 1 - 8;

- Ensure that Rowan’s Law Day, which occurs on the last Wednesday in September, is recognized in their school through an awareness event.

#### Concussion Codes of Conduct:

- Make the Concussion Codes of Conduct (Appendix D & E) available, through letters or emails, in a student handbook and/or on the board’s website, to students, parents, school and school board staff, and volunteers;
- Every school year receive confirmation of the review of Concussion Codes of Conduct (Appendices D & E) for those participating in board-sponsored interschool sports, including: coaches, team trainers, students, and parents of students under 18 years of age.

#### Identification of a Suspected Concussion:

- Ensure that all students, parents of students under the age of 18, board staff (including occasional staff and volunteers), involved in physical activity education and supervision (includes but not limited to: recess supervision, curricular, interschool, and intramural physical activity, before and after school care), are trained to recognize signs and symptoms of a suspected concussion and what immediate action to take, based on the OPHEA concussion protocol (Appendices F,G,H,I,J & K);
- Ensure that the Tool to Identify Suspected Concussion (Appendix K) is included in occasional teacher lessons plans and field trip folders;
- Advise the student with a suspected concussion, or student’s parent if the student is under the age of 18, to undergo a medical assessment by a physician or a nurse practitioner to confirm a diagnosis (Appendix L);
- Ensure the required forms are completed (e.g., appropriate appendices, OSBIE report).

#### Return to School Plan:

- Inform all school staff, including volunteers who work with the student, about the outcome of the medical assessment and if there are any monitoring requirements;
- Ensure that the Return to School Plan components, Return to Learning Plan and Return to Physical Activity Plan, (Appendices M,N,O,P &Q) are used when a student has been diagnosed with a concussion, regardless of whether the concussion was sustained at school or elsewhere;
- Ensure that all members of the collaborative school team, e.g., the school principal/designate, the concussed student, and student’s parents/guardians, teachers and volunteers who work with the student and the medical doctor or nurse practitioner, communicate regularly;
- Ensure that one school staff lead, from the collaborative school team, serves as the main point of contact for the student, the parents/guardians and other school staff and monitors the student’s progress through the Return to Learning and Return to Physical Activity Plans;
- File the Medical Concussion Assessment Form (Appendix L), and any documentation for the Return to Learning and Return to Physical Activity Forms (Appendix O) in the students’ OSR;
- For a student who is recovering from a concussion and is experiencing long-term difficulties that effect their learning, follow established processes for meeting the student’s ongoing learning needs (e.g., accommodations or modifications on an IEP).

#### Concussion Tracking:

- Use the School Concussion Management Form Return to Learning and Return to Physical Activity Form (Appendix O) to document and track a concussed student's progress, from removal to an activity due to a suspected concussion, to their return, through graduated steps, to learning and physical activity.

## **SCHOOL STAFF**

School staff should follow their school board's policies and the provisions in their collective agreements related to supporting students at risk for concussion in schools. Within the following components, school staff will:

#### Concussion Awareness Strategies and Training:

- Review the Ophea Concussion E-Learning Module and the board's concussion policy and procedural guidelines and provide confirmation of this review.

#### Concussion Codes of Conduct:

- Review the Concussion Code of Conduct for coaches and team trainers (Appendix E) for those participating in board-sponsored interschool sports and provide confirmation that it was reviewed yearly, prior to the participation in Board-sponsored interschool sports.

#### Identification of a Suspected Concussion:

- Review information on recognizing signs and symptoms of a suspected concussion and what immediate action to take (Appendices F,G,H,I,J & K);
- Advise the principal, vice-principal or designate when a student has a suspected concussion and provide information to complete the required reports.

#### Return to School Plan:

- Participate in the communication and monitoring of the concussed student as part of the collaborative school team;
- Refer to and follow the Return to School Plan components, i.e., Return to Learning Plan and Return to Physical Activity Plan (Appendices N & O) when a student has been diagnosed with a concussion;
- Ensure that occasional teaching staff are updated on a concussed student's condition;
- For a student who is recovering from a concussion and is experiencing long-term difficulties that effect their learning, follow established processes for meeting the student's ongoing learning needs (e.g., accommodations or modifications on an IEP).

#### Concussion Tracking:

- Use the School Concussion Management Form (Appendix O) to document and track a concussed student's progress, from removal to an activity due to a suspected concussion, to their return, through graduated steps, to learning and physical activity.

## **PARENTS/GUARDIANS**

As primary caregivers of their children, parents/guardians are expected to be active participants in supporting the management of their child's risk for concussion while a child is in school.

Within the following components, parents/guardians will:

### **Concussion Awareness Strategies**

- For those parents/guardians, of children under 18 years of age, who are participating in board-sponsored interschool sports, provide confirmation of the review of an approved Concussion Awareness Resource (Appendices A, B, & C).

### **Concussion Codes of Conduct:**

- Review the Concussion Code of Conduct for parents/guardians who have a child under the age of 18 (Appendix D) who participates in board-sponsored interschool sports;
- Provide confirmation that the Code of Conduct was reviewed yearly, prior to student participation in board-sponsored interschool sports.

### **Identification of a Suspected Concussion:**

- Notify the principal, vice-principal or designate when their child has a suspected concussion, regardless of whether the concussion was sustained at school or elsewhere;
- Have their child accessed as soon as possible by a physician or a nurse practitioner to confirm the diagnosis (Appendix L) and share the outcome with the school.

### **Return to School Plan:**

- Collaborate with the school to develop a Return to School Plan, i.e., Return to Learning and Return to Physical Activity (Appendix O) when their child has been diagnosed with a concussion;
- Communicate with the school team if their child, who is recovering from a concussion, is experiencing long-term difficulties that effect their learning and participate in established processes for meeting the child's ongoing learning needs (e.g., accommodations or modifications on an IEP).

### **Concussion Tracking:**

- Collaborate with the school to use the Concussion Management Form Return to Learning and Return to Physical Activity (Appendix O) to document and track their concussed child's progress, from removal to an activity due to a suspected concussion, to their return, through graduated steps, to learning and physical activity.
- Provide the school with confirmation that their child has been cleared to resume physical activity e.g., full participation in physical education, full participation in non-contact interschool sports (Appendix Q).

## **STUDENTS**

Depending on their cognitive, emotional, social, and physical stage of development, and their capacity for self-management, students are expected to actively support the implementation of concussion guidelines. Within the following components and when able, students will:

### Concussion Awareness Strategies

- Learn about concussions through related curriculum, using the revised Health and Physical Education Curriculum Grades 1-8;
- Participate in their school's Rowan's Law Day event;
- Review the approved Concussion Awareness Resource (Appendix A, B & C) prior to participation in board-sponsored interschool sports and provide confirmation of this review.

### Concussion Codes of Conduct:

- Review the Concussion Code of Conduct for students (Appendix D) who participate in board-sponsored interschool sports;
- Provide confirmation that it was reviewed yearly, prior to the participation in Board-sponsored interschool sports.

### Identification of a Suspected Concussion:

- Review information on recognizing signs and symptoms of a suspected concussion and what immediate action to take (Appendices A, B, & C and related curriculum);
- Immediately inform school staff of suspected or diagnosed concussions occurring during or outside of school;
- Remain on school premises until parent/guardian arrives if concussion is suspected;
- Immediately inform school staff if experiencing any concussion related symptoms (immediate, delayed or reoccurring).

### Return to School Plan:

- When a student has been diagnosed with a concussion, follow concussion management strategies as per medical doctor's or nurse practitioner's direction and their Return to Learning and Return to Physical Activity Plans.

### Concussion Tracking:

- Communicate concerns and challenges during their recovery process with school staff, parents/guardians and health care providers, using the Concussion Management Form Return to Learning and Return to Physical Activity (Appendix O) to document and track progress.

## **LIABILITY**

In 2001, the Ontario government passed the Good Samaritan Act to protect individuals from liability with respect to voluntary emergency medical or first-aid services. Subsections 2(1) and (2) of this act state the following with regard to individuals:

- 2. (1) Despite the rules of common law, a person described in subsection (2) who voluntarily and without reasonable expectation of compensation or reward provides the services described in that subsection is not liable for damages that result from the person's negligence in acting or failing to act while providing the services, unless it is established that the damages were caused by the gross negligence of the person.

- (2) Subsection (1) applies to, ... (b) an individual ... who provides emergency first aid assistance to a person who is ill, injured or unconscious as a result of an accident or other emergency, if the individual provides the assistance at the immediate scene of the accident or emergency.

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix A Concussion Awareness Resource Ages 10 and Under  
 Appendix B Concussion Awareness Resource Ages 11-14  
 Appendix C Concussion Awareness Resource Ages 15 and Up  
 Appendix D Code of Conduct Athletes, Parents of Athletes Under 18  
 Appendix E Code of Conduct Coaches, Trainers, Officials  
 Appendix F Chart Identifying a Concussion – Roles and Responsibilities  
 Appendix G Concussion Initial Identification and Response  
 Appendix H Red Flag and Other Concussion Signs and Symptoms  
 Appendix I Red Flag Procedure  
 Appendix J Quick Memory Function Check  
 Appendix K Tool to Identify Suspected Concussion  
 Appendix L Medical Concussion Assessment Form  
 Appendix M Chart Diagnosed Concussion – Stages and Responsibilities  
 Appendix N General Procedures for Return to School  
 Appendix O Concussion Management Form Return to Learning/Return to Physical Activity  
 Appendix P School Strategies for Cognitive, Emotional/Behavioural Difficulties  
 Appendix Q Medical Concussion Clearance Form

## **REFERENCES/ SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

Thanks in part to the District School Board of Niagara and the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board for lending drafts of their concussion policy, procedure and protocol during the creation of the original Policy dated February 18, 2015.

Special thanks to OPHEA for permission to reproduce and adapt materials pertaining to *Ontario Physical Education Safety Guidelines: Concussion Protocols, and related forms.*  
<https://safety.ophea.net/concussions>

Policy/ Program Memorandum No. 158: School Board Policies on Concussion  
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/ppm-158-jan-2020.pdf>

Bill 193: An Act to enact Rowan's Law (Concussion Safety), 2018  
<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/S18001>

[Rowan's Law Concussion Safety Ministry Website](https://www.ontario.ca/page/rowans-law-concussion-safety)  
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/rowans-law-concussion-safety>

Ontario School Boards' Insurance Exchange:  
<https://www.osbie.on.ca/>