

GEORGIA SOCCER POLICY ON CONCUSSION AWARENESS AND RETURN TO PLAY
GUIDELINES
ADOPTED JULY 27, 2013
Revised July, 2016

I. GENERAL POLICY STATEMENT

Georgia Soccer and its' member Affiliate soccer clubs are united in their dedication to the safety of all players involved in the sport of soccer. As a member of the Georgia Concussion Coalition since 2011, Georgia Soccer has worked to support the safety of all Youth athletes from the effects of a concussive injury and, as a result, the State of Georgia enacted the 'Return To Play Act of 2013' in April, 2013

It shall be the policy of Georgia Soccer and its Affiliated Members to follow all Federal, State, and local legal requirements including, but not limited to, the removal from play of any Youth player suspected to have sustained a concussion.

Georgia Soccer asks parents, coaches, volunteer and paid staff, game officials, and club administrators to be vigilant in the area of player safety for all potentially serious types of injuries, including head, neck, and spine areas. Concussions, also referred to as traumatic brain injuries (TBI), are particularly dangerous to the Youth athlete as the brain is still undergoing significant growth up to and during the teenage years.

It shall be the policy of Georgia Soccer to require that, at the time of spring and fall registration, all member Affiliates provide the CDC "Heads Up" Concussion fact sheet to every administrator, coach and parent or guardian of each Youth player detailing the general signs and symptoms of potential concussive injury. (CDC "Heads Up" Concussion Fact Sheet found on the Risk Management pages of the Georgia Soccer website www.georgiasoccer.org)

II. AFFILIATE REGISTRATION AND ADMINISTRATION PROCESS

1. At the time of each spring and fall registration, or otherwise at time of selection/registration period for any State managed program different from the annual Affiliate registration period, both Georgia State programs and local Affiliates shall provide the current CDC “Heads Up” Concussion fact sheet along with instructions to view the CDC video to all of their administrators, coaches, parents and guardians of Youth players (CDC “Heads Up” Concussion Fact Sheet/video link found on the Georgia Soccer web site under Risk Management).
2. A specific acknowledgement by all State and local Affiliate administrators, coaches and players’ parent/legal guardian in having been provided access to the CDC “Heads Up” Concussion fact sheet must be received by either the State Program Administrator or local affiliate during that same registration process. The State Program Administrator or local Affiliate is responsible for collecting, certifying, and maintaining the records of the administrators, coaches and parent’s/legal guardian’s acknowledgement.
3. Effective with the Fall 2016 playing season all paid and volunteer coaches, regardless of license status are required to take the current free online CDC “Heads Up” Concussion training as provided on the Risk Management web page as found on the GeorgiaSoccer.org web site. State Program Administrators or Affiliate clubs shall inform their coaches of this policy and the “PROTOCOL”, “RETURN TO PLAY” and “NOTIFICATION” guidelines provided on the Risk Management web page. The State program administrator or local Affiliate is responsible for insuring that all Coaches and Assistant Coaches successfully complete this online training prior to each season’s start of games, and for maintaining records of this coach training.
Coaches taking and completing the CDC “Heads Up” Concussion Awareness course during their coach certification six month prior to the next season will have met the course requirement for this policy for the upcoming season. Coaches and assistant coaches will be required to successfully complete any supplemental training, online or class, as provided by the Director of Coaching and/or the Risk Management Committee.
4. A properly completed “MEDICAL RELEASE FORM”, which will also include the players’ head injury history as provided by the parent/guardian, for each registered player shall be kept in the possession of the team staff when participating in any Georgia Soccer sanctioned event.
5. This policy applies to any/all Georgia Soccer Sanctioned events, including, but not all inclusive, games, practices, tournaments (whether in Georgia or other State approved travel to out-of-state events).

III. REPORTING PROCEDURES

1. A Youth player suspected of sustaining a possible head injury shall be immediately removed from play by the coach, or other authorized team official during that team activity– “When in doubt, sit them out”. The decision to remove an injured player can also be made by an approved, or assigned, Ga. licensed health care provider, hereafter referred to as HCP, as defined by current Georgia State Law. The players’ coach cannot override the decision of an approved or assigned licensed on-site health care provider to remove any player from the game/practice, etc.

b. Any Youth player participating in any Georgia Soccer sanctioned event is covered under this Policy regardless of League or state affiliation.

2. A Youth player who has been removed from play, during games or practices, for any concern regarding a possible head injury must receive written clearance from an approved or assigned HCP before being allowed to return to play.

a. The State program administrator or local Affiliate is responsible for insuring that the HCP has met the legal requirements under the current Georgia legal code for being legally approved to serve as a HCP under Georgia law and for approving removal and returning to play. This can be done at the field if an approved, or assigned, Ga. licensed health care provider is at the field.

b. The Ga. licensed health care provider must sign the RETURN TO PLAY form indicating their concurrence for the athlete to return to play. Parents or legal guardian of the player must also cosign this return to play form, providing their agreement with HCP’s approval.

3. When any coach or other Ga State or local affiliate representative suspects any player of having received a possible head injury at practice or a game they will formally report this possibility to the player’s parent or legal guardian, as well to any present HCP, using the ‘GEORGIA SOCCER NOTIFICATION OF POSSIBLE CONCUSSION’ form.

4. Parents/legal guardians of Youth players, as well as an approved or assigned HCP, previously notified in writing of having a suspected concussion by their coach/affiliate official will be required to submit a signed confirmation from an appropriate HCP to that coach/affiliate official that confirms the Youth player has been “cleared” to return to play, including an acknowledgement by the parent/legal guardian.

5. All forms completed under this policy are in duplicate, one copy for the parent/guardian and one for the Affiliate club administration.

6. All coaching staff shall have the following forms in their possession during any match/practice available in case of a suspected concussive head injury;
GEORGIA SOCCER NOTIFICATION OF POSSIBLE CONCUSSION forms
RETURN TO PLAY forms
CONCUSSION PROCEDURE & PROTOCOL Sheet
REFUSE MEDICAL TREATMENT forms
GEORGIA SOCCER RETURN TO PLAY TICKET

IV. AFFILIATE RECORD AND REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES TO GEORGIA SOCCER

1. Georgia Soccer Policy requires that all State and Affiliate Coaches, Assistant Coaches, and Administrators will be provided "Concussion Awareness" information at time of registration. These parties will sign an acknowledgement of having received, read, and understood the information. The State/Affiliate will be required to keep the current season acknowledgements on file for future reference.
2. Each Affiliate will be required to submit to the State at time of Affiliate Annual registration, by July 1st, a signed confirmation statement from the Affiliate President/Executive Director, sent by the Affiliate's Registrar stating that all parents, players, coaches, assistant coaches, and administrators have been provided the "Concussion Awareness" information. The State Program Administrators will submit their confirmation to the State Executive Director.
3. Affiliates must implement this policy by the Fall 2016 season.
4. This Georgia Soccer policy will remain subservient to any and all future Federal, State, local laws and regulations as well as any established State or National Youth Soccer policy.
5. Questions should be directed to the Georgia Soccer Executive Director or Risk Management Committee Chair.
6. The Affiliate Risk Management Coordinators (ARMC) will assist the club administration in implementing this policy.
7. Any deviation from this policy must have the approval of the Georgia Soccer Board of Directors and notification of their decision must be communicated to the Executive Director and the Risk Management Committee.

V. ROLE OF GEORGIA LICENSED ATHLETIC TRAINERS, PHYSICIANS AND OTHER HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS AT SACTIONED EVENTS

1. Georgia Soccer and its Affiliates are encouraged to have on site a Georgia licensed Athletic Trainer (AT) working under the supervision of a Ga. licensed physician, or being Board approved by the Georgia State Athletic Trainer organization, or other licensed health care provider as defined under Georgia State law, at sanctioned events.

2. These Georgia State licensed, and/or Board approved, Athletic Trainers may be volunteers or paid by the Tournament Manager/Affiliate club/State sanctioned events and payments are the sole responsibility of the respective event organizer.

3. The Tournament Manager/Affiliate club and Georgia Soccer must coordinate with the assigned HCP's on their role as it relates to the Georgia Soccer Emergency Action Plan for that event.

4. All Ga. licensed, and Board approved, Athletic Trainers/Ga. licensed physicians and/or other Ga. licensed health care providers must complete any paperwork required by the Tournament Manager/Affiliate club and Georgia Soccer to formally document their legal health care provider status. The HCP will be required to certify that they are (a) operating under the supervision of a Ga. licensed physician and (b) trained in the latest version SCAT and modified BESS concussion evaluation and management skill set.

The approved HCP(s) will be assigned to the venue games and a notification will be provided to the coaches, referees and field marshal advising them of who their assigned HCP is for those games and how to notify the HCP to respond to their match/practice when needed. It is recommended that an assigned HCP be present at each venue site.

5. Parents of minor children participating in the Georgia Soccer sanctioned event have the right to refuse to let a Ga. licensed Athletic Trainer or Ga. licensed health care provider treat their child, even against medical advice. The coach must provide a "Refuse Treatment" form (concurrent with Georgia State Law) for the parent to sign relieving the Ga. licensed Athletic Trainer or Ga. licensed physician/health care provider of abandonment of patient. When any parent so chooses to declare such, the players' coach/team official is to assume that a serious head injury may have occurred and that the player will not be allowed to return to play until that player/child receives a formal clearance

by a stipulated HCP or licensed physician. All signed “Refuse Treatment” forms will be kept in the possession of the attending Ga. licensed health care provider and also the local affiliate.

6. Exception to Section V.5. If in the medical opinion of the Ga. licensed Athletic Trainer or Ga. licensed health care provider the suspected concussed minor child needs immediate medical attention, then the attending Ga. licensed Athletic Trainer or Ga. licensed health care provider should call 911 and request Emergency Medical Services to respond to the event location. Nothing in this section prevents other parties including club staff or attendees from calling emergency medical services if the participant player appears to need immediate medical attention.

7. If a coach is approached by a non-assigned/approved HCP wanting to assess the injured player, the coach will defer to the parent/guardian as to whether to allow the possible head injured player to be assessed by the non-assigned HCP or seek other medical assessment or treatment at a medical facility. As such, if the volunteer HCP credentials cannot be verified then, “if in doubt, sit them out”, and the coach shall not return the player to play/practice unless a signed “Return to Play” clearance form is given to the coach by an approved HCP.

VI. Playing Rules

Georgia Soccer supports USSF policy with intent to either restrict, or limit, heading in either of games and/or practices for players in U13 and younger age groups. The Georgia Soccer Board will implement such necessary Georgia Soccer Youth rule modifications to apply to all State and local Affiliate sanctioned youth programs to best meet USSF policy, current, or in future. This policy, with regard to program age groups, playing rules, current or future, will adjust to meet any future youth playing rule adjustment that the State Board chooses to implement, in keeping with meeting any USSF Youth playing policy, and/or State law(s).

VII APPENDIX

Definition of Terms

1. Minor Child: is defined under Georgia Law as a person less than eighteen (18) years of age.
2. HCP: A Georgia licensed health care provider is defined as under current Georgia Law as a Georgia licensed physician, Doctor of Osteopathy or a Georgia licensed athletic trainer working under the supervision of a licensed physician, or a Georgia Athletic Trainer Board approved, Athletic Trainer or other health care provider certified to evaluate and manage a concussion. Any subsequent change to Georgia Law relating to the definition of an HCP will automatically update this policy as becoming the new definition of an HCP under this policy.