



## **RISING TIDE CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL - CONCUSSION POLICY**

Approved by the Board of Trustees on September 19, 2022

### **Purpose**

In accordance with Massachusetts State Law 105 CMR 201.00 the Rising Tide Charter Public School has created a concussion policy to prevent, train, manage, and guide the return to academic and athletic activity of student athletes who receive head injuries during extracurricular athletic activities, including but not limited to interscholastic sports. This policy follows Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) regulations. The school will submit this concussion policy to the MDPH documenting that we are in compliance with all head injury policies, at which point it will be updated every two years.

### **Definitions**

As used in 105 CMR 201.000, unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the following words shall have the following meanings:

Athlete: A student who prepares for or participates in an extracurricular athletic activity.

Athletic Director: An individual employed by a school district or school and responsible for administering the athletic program or programs of a school.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: One of the major agencies of the United States Department of Health and Human Services with a mission to protect the health of people and communities through health promotion, prevention of disease, injury and disability.

Coach: An employee or volunteer responsible for organizing and supervising student athletes to teach them the fundamental skills of extracurricular athletic activities. The term coach refers to both head coaches and assistant coaches.

Commissioner: The Commissioner of the Department of Public Health or his or her designee.

Concussion: A complex disturbance in brain function, due to direct or indirect trauma to the head, related to neurometabolic dysfunction, rather than structural injury.

Department: The Department of Public Health.

Diagnosed: A physician's or nurse practitioner's opinion, derived from observation, examination, and evaluation of procedures or tests of a patient, that the patient has or had a concussion.

Extracurricular Athletic Activity: An organized school sponsored athletic activity generally occurring outside of school instructional hours under the direction of a coach or athletic director. All interscholastic athletics are deemed to be extracurricular athletic activities.

Game Official: A person who officiates at an extracurricular athletic activity, such as a referee or umpire including but not limited to persons enrolled as game officials in Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association.

Head Injury: A direct blow to the head or indirect trauma to the head including a concussion or traumatic brain injury. Scalp or facial laceration alone is not a head injury.

Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA): A private, non-profit association organized by its member schools, public and private, to govern, coordinate and promote athletic activities in 33 or more sports for high school students.

MIAA Member Schools: All schools, whether public or private, that participate in interscholastic athletics under the auspices and rules of the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association.

Neuropsychologist: A professional who is licensed as a psychologist and certified as a health service provider by the Board of Registration of Psychologists pursuant to M.G.L. c. 112, §§ 118 through 129A with additional specialized training and expertise in the applied science of brain-behavior relationships and who has specific experience in evaluating neurocognitive, behavioral and psychological conditions and their relationship to central nervous system functioning. The neuropsychologist has specialized experience in administering and interpreting neuropsychological tests and has duties which may include, but are not limited to pre-injury measurement of the cognitive abilities that may be disturbed by a concussion, testing within the first few days post-head injury, and periodic retesting to track resolution of the student's symptoms and improvement in cognitive functioning. The neuropsychologist may also advise school staff regarding the student's need for post injury academic accommodations.

Nurse Practitioner: A duly licensed and registered nurse authorized to practice in an expanded role as a nurse practitioner whose professional activities include performing physical examinations, diagnosing health and developmental problems, managing therapeutic regimens, and ordering therapies and tests.

Parent: The parent, guardian or foster parent of a student.

Physician: A duly licensed doctor of medicine or osteopathy.

Play: A practice or competition.

School: A single school that operates under the direct administration of a principal, head master, director or school leader appointed by a school district, or a charter school board or independent school board of trustees. School includes a public school operated by a municipal or regional school district, an education collaborative established under M.G.L. c. 40, § 4E, or a school granted a charter by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education under M.G.L. c. 71, § 89 and 603 CMR 1.00: Charter Schools and operated by a board of trustees including Commonwealth and Horace Mann charter schools. School includes, but is not limited to, public and other schools that are members of MIAA. The term does not include associations of home-schooled students.

School District: A municipal school department or regional school district, acting through its school committee or superintendent of schools; a county agricultural school, acting through its board of trustees or superintendent director; a charter school, acting through its board of trustees or school leader; an educational collaborative; or any other public school established by statute or charter, acting through its governing board.

School Nurse: A nurse practicing in a school setting who is licensed to practice as a Registered Nurse by the Board of Registration in Nursing pursuant to M.G.L. c. 112, who is licensed to work as an educator in a school by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education pursuant to 603 CMR 7.00: Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval, and who is appointed or assigned to a public school by a school committee or a board of health in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, § 53 or employed by a superintendency district comprised of several towns in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 53A and 53B or, who is employed, in the case of a charter or private school, by a board of trustees.

School Physician: A licensed physician practicing in a school setting including but not limited to a physician who is appointed or employed by a school committee or board of health in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, § 53, or employed by a superintendency district comprised of several towns in accordance M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 53A, 53B or, in the case of a charter or private school, by the board of trustees. School physician includes, but is not limited to, physicians assigned to examine children who apply for health certificates in order to obtain an employment permit pursuant to M.G.L. c. 71, § 54 and team physicians.

School Health Advisory/Wellness Committee: A committee consisting of school and community members who advise a school district on its comprehensive, coordinated school health program.

Second Impact Syndrome: A potentially lethal condition that can occur when a person sustains a head injury prior to complete healing of a previous brain injury, causing dysregulation of cerebral blood flow with subsequent vascular engorgement.

Sports: Extracurricular athletic activities.

Student: A person enrolled for part-time or full-time attendance in an educational program operated by a school or school district, including home schoolers.

Teacher: Any person employed in a school or school district under a license listed in 603 CMR 7.00: Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval or person employed to teach students in a non-public school.

Trainer: A person who provides students who participate in an extracurricular athletic activity with health and fitness instruction, including but not limited to the fundamental skills of performance, strength, or conditioning, but who is not licensed as a certified athletic trainer.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI): A complex pathophysiological process affecting the brain, induced by traumatic biomechanical forces. TBI may be caused either by a direct blow to the head, face, neck or elsewhere on the body with an impulsive force transmitted to the head. TBI includes, but is not limited to, a concussion.

Volunteer: An adult who volunteers as a game official, coach, assistant coach, team parent, physician, nurse, or in an authoritative role to assist students who are engaged in an extracurricular athletic activity

### **School Policies**

The Rising Tide Charter Public School has designated the Athletic Director to oversee the implementation of policies and protocols governing the prevention and management of sports related traumatic brain injuries. The school nurse will also play a primary role through managing the supports provided when a student is removed from play as a result of a concussion or suspected concussion, or has a history of head injuries prior to their participation in athletics at Rising Tide.

The Athletic Director will:

- 1) Support and enforce protocols, required training and reporting
- 2) Ensure that all necessary documentation is in place
- (3) Documentation of physical examination prior to a student's participation in extracurricular athletic activities on an annual basis, consistent with 105 CMR 200.100(B)(3) and information for students participating in multiple sports seasons that documentation of one physical examination each year is sufficient;
- 4) Review and update the policy every two years
- 5) Annually report statistics of the number of "Report of Head Injury Forms" received by the school as well as the number of students diagnosed with suspected concussions due to participation in extracurricular athletic activities.

The School Nurse will:

- 1) Be responsible for managing the students graduated reentry plan. This includes:

- a) Communicating with the student's family and physician
  - b) Discussing the student's graduated reentry plan with relevant school personnel.
  - c) Checking in with the student on a regular basis and adjusting his/her plan as necessary
- 2) Review and evaluate "Head Injury/Concussion" section on FamilyID prior to the season.
  - 3) Work in consultation with a student's family and physician to guide safe return to athletic participation after removal from play has occurred but a concussion has not been diagnosed.

### **Annual Training Requirement**

The MDPH requires that specific school personnel as well as student athletes and their families are trained annually about concussions. The Rising Tide Athletic Director, coaches, volunteers, school nurse, and student athletes trying out for a sport as well as one parent/guardian must successfully complete, on a yearly basis, one of the following online courses:

1. "Concussion in Sports: What You Need to Know" offered through the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)
2. "Heads Up Concussion In Youth Sports" Offered through the Centers for Disease Control

On the Sports Registration on FamilyID an agreement must be signed by both the parent/guardian and the student athlete signifying the successful completion of either online course. In addition coaches will work to teach form, technique and skills designed to minimize the risk of concussion. All coaches will be given a copy of the concussion plan prior to the start of their season.

### **Pre-Participation Head Injury Reporting Forms**

All student athletes must provide a history of head injury to the school before each athletic season. This is accomplished through the completion and submission of the "Head and Injury Concussion Agreement" on the FamilyID sports registration form. A student must submit the registration form on FamilyID and all required fields must be filled out in order to tryout for a team at Rising Tide. This can be found in the athletic section of the school's website.

The Athletic Director and School Nurse will review the "Head and Injury/Concussion section" of the registration form. If the nurse has concerns, he/she will follow up with the Athletic Director, parents and student prior to the student's participation in extracurricular athletic activities. The school nurse has the right to prevent a student from trying out based on his/her history of head trauma.

### **Removing Athletes from Play and Medical Evaluation**

“When in doubt, sit them out.” Above all else this is what coaches should remember. Removing a concussed athlete from play is critical, as participating in athletic activity after sustaining a concussion can lead to severe short and long term consequences, and even death. If a student is removed from play due to exhibiting concussion symptoms under no circumstances will the student be allowed to return to play that day.

Students removed from play due to a suspected head injury or who are showing any signs or symptoms consistent with a head injury should not leave that day’s practice or game without their parent or guardian being notified by the coach. The coach will require that the parent/guardian take the student for a professional medical evaluation before returning to play.

### **Reports of Head Injury During the Season**

If a head injury occurs during the season at a Rising Tide Charter Public School sponsored event, the coach will immediately remove the athlete from play and complete a “Report of Head Injury During Sports Season Form.” The form must be completed on the day of the injury and then submitted to the school nurse or athletic director the morning of the next school day.

If a head injury takes place during the season but outside of a school athletic practice or game, the parent/guardian should do the following:

- 1) Have the child seen by his/her physician before returning to school
- 2) Bring in a note from that physician if s/he diagnoses a concussion
- 3) Complete the “Report of Head Injury Form” found on the athletics section of the school’s website and provide it to the School Nurse or Athletic Director as soon as the child returns to school. Parents will be made aware of this requirement at the Athletic Director’s pre-season meeting for student athletes and parents held at the beginning of each athletic season.

### **Medical Clearance for Return to Play**

If a student athlete is removed from play due to a suspected concussion s/he may not return until s/he has received written medical clearance from a licensed physician. If the student has been diagnosed with a concussion the student will need medical clearance from a physician after s/he has completed the graduated return to play plan (see below).

If the student has been medically cleared by his/her physician to return to play but school staff have observed concussion symptoms, the Athletic Director in consultation with the school nurse will make the final decision regarding when the student is allowed to return to play.

## **Development and Implementation of Post Concussion Graduated Reentry Plan**

All Rising Tide student athletes who are removed from a sports practice or game and diagnosed by a licensed physician with a concussion will have a written graduated reentry plan to guide their return to both academic and athletic life. The plan will be directed by the student's physician, who must complete the school version of the Centers for Disease Control's Acute Concussion Evaluation (ACE) Care Plan at the visit when the concussion is diagnosed. The family will then submit the form to the school nurse upon the student's return to Rising Tide. The form can be found in the athletic section of the school's website. The physician will work in consultation with the school nurse, the student's advisor, and the special education staff, when appropriate, to write the plan for a student who has suffered a concussion. The student's parent/guardian will also take part in the process. This plan may include academic accommodations if necessary and could involve, but are not limited to, the following until the student is at a pre-concussion academic level:

- 1) Physical and/or cognitive rest
- 2) A gradual return to the classroom
- 3) Assessments by the school nurse
- 4) Periodic medical assessments by a physician

The nurse will manage the plan by monitoring the student's progress and communicating with the parents/guardians, student's physician, and relevant school personnel. A copy of the student's graduated reentry plan will be kept by the nurse on file in the student's medical record.

The "Return to Play Plan" guides the return to athletic activity of the student's graduated reentry plan. A student will not begin the graduated return to play plan until s/he is symptom free at rest and has received written clearance by a licensed physician. The graduated return to play plan will go through the following process:

1. Light exercise. In this stage the student is permitted to participate in light non-contact exercise such as walking or riding an exercise bike. Higher intensity aerobic activity such as sprints or weight training are not permitted.
2. Aerobic exercise. Students may run on the field or in the gym.
3. Non-contact training drills. Students may participate in all non-contact training drills. Weight training may begin.
4. Full contact controlled training drills. The student may participate in some practice drills that require body contact.
5. Full practice participation. This includes all activities involving body contact.

After completing the graduated reentry plan and being symptom free at all stages the student's physician must complete the "Post Sports Related Head Injury Medical

Clearance and Authorization Form” which can be found in the athletic section of the school website. It should be submitted to the school nurse who will notify the Athletic Director that the student is cleared to return to full contact game play.

6. Full contact game play.

A student cannot complete more than one step of the Return to Play Plan per day.

**Inclusion of Sports-Related Head Injury Policy in the Student Handbook**

Information regarding the school’s concussion policy is included in both the Athletic Handbook and Student Handbook.

**Outreach to Parents for Form and Training Completion**

All student athletes and their parents are required to complete and sign annually the Concussion Awareness form indicating successful completion from either the CDC or NFHS online course and the Head and Injury/Concussion section of registration prior to each season. If the school has not received either of these the Athletic Director will notify the student. If this outreach is unsuccessful a school administrator will attempt to contact the parent by phone. The student will not be able to participate in tryouts until both of these have been submitted.

**Sharing Concussion-Related Health Information**

It is critical that communication exist among various school personnel in order for a concussion related Gradual Reentry plan to be successful. However, confidentiality is also extremely important, so students’ health information will only be relayed between the necessary academic and athletic school personnel.

**Penalties**

The safety of student athletes at Rising Tide is a top priority. In order to ensure the safety of our student athletes the policies and procedures in this concussion plan must be followed. The critical message for coaches is to remove any athlete from play that they suspect of having a concussion. Once this occurs the coach cannot allow the student to return to play until cleared by his/her physician. Under no circumstances should a student be returned to play on the same day as being pulled for a possible concussion or head injury. Failure of a coach to follow this policy could result in disciplinary action or the forfeiture of games. If students or parents are concerned that the policy is not being followed, they should contact the Athletic Director or the Head of School.