

Ohio's Return to Play Law – Frequently Asked Questions

1. When does the law go into effect?

Ohio's return to play law goes into effect on **April 26th, 2013**.

2. What is Bill 143 : Ohio's Return-to-play law ?

As of April 26th, 2013, Ohio's return-to-play law (ORC 3707.511) requires the following for youth sports organizations:

- Requires a youth sports organization to provide to the parent or other guardian of an individual who wishes to practice for or compete in an athletic activity organized by the organization, a concussion and head injury information sheet created by the Department of Health.
- Prohibits an individual from acting as a coach or referee for a youth sports organization without successfully completing a free online training program every three years in recognizing the signs and symptoms of concussions.
- The youth sports organization for which the individual intends to act as a coach or referee shall inform the individual of the training requirements.
- Requires a coach, referee, or official of a youth sports organization to remove an athlete exhibiting signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with having sustained a concussion or head injury from practice or competition.
- Prohibits a coach, referee or official of a youth sports organization from allowing an athlete to return to play on the same day as he/she is removed.
- Prohibits a coach, referee, or official of a youth sports organization from allowing an individual to return to the practice or competition from which the individual was removed or to participate in any other practice or competition for which the coach, referee, or official is responsible until the individual has been assessed and cleared for return by a physician or by any other licensed health care provider authorized by the youth sports organization.

3. As a coach/referee, when do I have to complete my concussion training certification?

As soon as you can. Ohio's "Return-to-Play law goes into effect on April 26, 2013 so the certification must be done by that date.

4. What training modules are available for coaches, referees, and officials?

Per ORC 3707.52 as enacted by [Ohio HB 143 of the 129th General Assembly](#), ODH is required to post free training programs that train coaches and referees in recognizing the signs and symptoms of concussions and head injuries.

The following free online trainings have been approved by the Ohio Department of Health for coaches and referees:



National Federation of State High School Associations Concussion in Sports - What you Need to Know:

<http://www.nfhslearn.com/electiveDetail.aspx?courseID=38000>

(This free on-line course is available through the NFHS. You will need to click the “order here” button and complete a brief registration form to take the course.) Follow these steps to complete the course:

1. Click on the button that says, please login to order. In the window that appears, click Register Now.
2. When your registration is complete you may "order" the free concussion course offered along the left hand side of the page. Continue following prompts. Although it may look like you'll be charged for the course, there is no cost.
3. Once you've completed "checkout," you'll be able to take the free online course.
4. When you've completed and passed the course, you have the option of printing a certificate of completion.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Heads Up Concussion in Youth Sports On-Line Training Program:

http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/online_training.html

PLEASE NOTE: Both courses offer a “certificate of completion” upon successful passage. The NFHS course allows OYSAN to search for and [track coaches who have completed the course](#).

*****OYSAN mandates all coaches, referees, and officials to complete the NFHS training. *****

5. **Where is the Spanish version of the training located?**

The Spanish version is available on through the CDC website training at the following link:

<http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/spanish/youth.html>

6. **I am a volunteer coach/referee/official, do I have to complete a concussion training certification?**

Yes. The law does not make a distinction between volunteers and paid coaches, referees, and officials

7. **I am a coach/referee and I am under 18 years old, do I still need to comply with the Return-to-Play law?**

Yes. All coaches, referees, and officials, regardless of age, or paid or volunteer status, must comply with the Return-to-Play law.

8. **How often do I have to be recertified?**

Certifications are valid for three years.

9. **I am a parent, can I take the training even if I am not coaching or refereeing?**

We encourage all OYSAN parents to take advantage of the free courses offered to help you better identify, prevent and treat concussions. But remember, the coach/referee/official has the



ultimate authority to determine whether they believe they have witnessed signs and symptoms of a concussion and have the ultimate authority to require the athlete to sit out the game or practice, even if you disagree. Remember, “when in doubt, sit it out.”

10. Can a child return to play on the same day if he/she is cleared to return by a physician or other authorized health care provider?

No. Ohio law prohibits a child to return to play (practice or competition) on the same day that he/she is removed on suspicion of having sustained a concussion, regardless of whether he/she has been cleared by a physician or other authorized health care provider. He/she may return the following day if cleared in writing by a physician or other authorized health care provider.

11. How often do leagues need to provide the concussion information sheet to athletes’ parents/guardians?

Every seasonal year the concussion information sheet must be distributed to your members. You can find it at http://www.oysan.org/Membership_Benefits/Policies_Forms.htm under “Concussion Information Form”.

12. I am a coach/referee and suspect that an athlete may have a concussion due to the athlete showing some signs and symptoms of a concussion, but I am not positive. What should I do?

In many situations, coaches/referees are not licensed medical professionals and do not have the medical expertise to diagnose concussions. For that reason, if a coach/referee suspects that an athlete has a concussion, based on the training and observations, they should err on the side of safety and pull the athlete from play.

13. Do parents or guardians need to sign anything acknowledging receipt of Ohio Department of Health concussion Information Sheet?

No. Parents do not need to sign anything acknowledging receipt of the Ohio Dept of Health Concussion Information Sheet, but leagues must be able to demonstrate, if asked by OYSAN, that they have provided the sheets to parents. OYSAN recommends that the leagues include the information sheets in the registration materials to their clubs.

14. What is the role of coaches in administering the Return to Play law?

Coaches must know the signs and symptoms of concussions and prohibit any athlete who displays these signs or symptoms from participating in a practice or a contest. Coaches are not medical professionals and have no authority to determine whether or not a student has sustained a concussion, so they should err on the side of safety. The coach is responsible for insuring that the student’s parents are notified and the student is referred to a medical professional. The coach is also responsible to ensure that an athlete with a suspected concussion (1) does not return to play that same day, and (2) provides a written medical release from a physician prior to returning to play.



15. **I'm a coach and one of my athletes was taken out of play because of a suspected concussion. What do I have to do before I let them back on the field for a game or practice?**

An athlete who was taken out of play due to a suspected concussion is not permitted to return to play that same day under any circumstance. Assuming it's not the same day, that athlete must present a written medical release from a licensed medical professional that allows the athlete to return to play. Coaches should provide copies of these written releases to the league so they can be stored and maintained by the league.

16. **I'm a coach/referee/official and I'm not sure whether an athlete is displaying the signs and symptoms of a concussion. Can I consult with the other coach/referee/official who witnessed the injury?**

Yes. Coaches, referees, and officials should be comfortable consulting each other for assistance in determining whether an athlete is displaying the signs and symptoms of a concussion. Remember, "when in doubt, sit it out."

17. **I'm the parent and I don't think my child should be removed from the game or practice, can I stop the coach/referee/official from removing her and/or tell the coach/referee/official to put her back in?**

No. Coaches, referees, and officials have been trained on the signs, symptoms, and risks of concussions and must use their own judgment – even if you disagree – to determine whether an athlete should be removed from the game or practice if a concussion is suspected. Likewise, a parent cannot direct a coach to let their athlete back in the game or practice (1) that same day, or (2) before receiving written authorization from a medical professional. Remember, "when in doubt, sit it out."

18. **I'm a coach/referee/official and I believe an athlete is displaying symptoms of a concussion, but the parent told me to let the athlete to continue to play. What do I do?**

Coaches, referees, and officials must use their own judgment – even if the parents disagree – and remove athletes from games or practice who display symptoms of a concussion. Remember, "when in doubt, sit it out."

19. **Do tournaments count as "youth sports organization" such that the Return to Play law would apply?**

Yes. A "youth sports organization" means a public or nonpublic entity that organizes an athletic activity in which the athletes are not more than nineteen years of age and are required to pay a fee to participate in the athletic activity or whose cost to participate is sponsored by a business or nonprofit organization. Leagues, coaches, referees, officials, and athletes and their families must all follow the Return to Play law regardless of whether it's a game, tournament, scrimmage, or practice.



20. How does the new Return to Play law affect out-of-state teams that come to OYSAN-sanctioned tournaments?

Just like any Ohio law, those visiting from out-of-state must comply with the Ohio Return to Play law. The entity that organizes the tournament, which, in most cases, is not OYSAN, must ensure that all coaches and referees are concussion trained and understand Ohio's laws. The good news is that all but a few states (Arkansas, Georgia, Tennessee, South Carolina, West Virginia, and Montana) already enacted similar concussion laws, so most traveling coaches and referees have received this training. The organization responsible for the tournament is also responsible to let the coaches, referees, and officials know their obligations under Ohio law.

21. How does this law affect OYSAN teams that travel to out-of state tournaments?

Anyone coaching an Ohio team must complete concussion training. Any team traveling out-of-state must abide by the laws of that state, which may include additional or different concussion laws. In addition to Ohio, forty-two states currently have some type of youth sports concussion law. Only Arkansas, Georgia, Tennessee, South Carolina, West Virginia, and Montana have not yet passed a similar law, but legislation is pending in Montana, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

22. Will tournaments be required to comply with the Return to Play law?

Yes. The tournament must provide the concussion head injury information sheet to the player's parent, guardian, or "other person having care or charge" of the player, which may be the coach or a parent of another player. Coaches and referees participating in tournaments must also comply with training requirements and rules related to removal from and return to play.

23. Will tournaments be required to ensure that all of the coaches and referees at the tournament have taken the on line training course?

Yes, if the tournament occurs in Ohio, then the tournament will be required to ensure compliance with Ohio's laws, which means that all coaches traveling from out of state must be concussion certified.