

## FHO Concussion Policy in Accordance with Rowan’s Law

### BACKGROUND

#### *Purpose*

Field Hockey Ontario (FHO) is committed to the long-term health and safety of its participants. The purpose of this policy is to provide awareness information for concussion prevention, recognition, removal-from-sport, and return-to-sport requirements. As of July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019, FHO must comply with the Rowan’s Law legislation as a sporting organization within the province of Ontario.

#### *Scope*

This policy applies to all club, regional and provincial field hockey programs operated under Field Hockey Ontario accreditation.

#### *Concussion Definition*

Concussion is a form of traumatic brain injury caused by a direct blow to the head, face or neck or may be caused by a blow elsewhere on the body that transmits a force to the head. Concussion is a functional injury of the brain, rather than a structural injury, and thus often does not appear on standard diagnostic imaging such as x-ray, MRI, or CT scan. It is important to be able to recognize and address a potentially serious injury to the brain.

<b>**Signs &amp; Symptoms of Concussion**</b>		
Headache	“pressure in head”	Nausea/vomiting
Dizziness	Blurred vision	Balance problems
Light sensitivity	Noise sensitivity	Feeling “slowed down”
Feeling “in a fog”	“don’t feel right”	Difficulty concentrating
Difficulty remembering	Fatigue/low energy	Confusion
Drowsiness	More emotional	Irritability
Sadness	Nervous/anxious	Trouble falling asleep
Loss of consciousness	Amnesia	

**\*\*Note\*\*** Each concussion is different, manifesting in different signs and symptoms profiles. Not all of the above signs and symptoms may be reported/experienced/observed by/in the injured individual. Signs and symptoms may range from mild to severe, and may be experienced immediately or not for several hours or days after the initial impact.

## FIELD HOCKEY ONTARIO CONCUSSION POLICY

### *Athletes*

As of July 1st, 2019, all athletes under the age of 26 (and their parent/guardian if that athlete is under 18 years of age) must review and acknowledge this review of FHO's *Concussion Code of Conduct for Athletes* and the age-appropriate Government of Ontario *Concussion Awareness Resource* as part of their membership registration and **before** they can participate in any FHO-accredited event or programming. This review and acknowledgement must be done on an **annual basis**.

- [Field Hockey Ontario- Athlete Concussion Code of Conduct](#)
- [Government of Ontario Concussion Awareness Resource for ages 15 and up](#)
- [Government of Ontario Concussion Awareness Resource for ages 11-14](#)
- [Government of Ontario Concussion Awareness Resource for ages 10 and under](#)

### *Coaches*

As of July 1st, 2019, all coaches registered/coaching within FHO must review and acknowledge this review of FHO's Concussion Code of Conduct for Staff and the age-appropriate Government of Ontario's Concussion Awareness Resource (pertaining to the age of athletes they are primarily working with) **before** they can work within any FHO-accredited events or programming. This review and acknowledgement of review must be completed on an **annual basis**. This rule also applies to any officials and medical staff that may be working with any FHO-accredited events.

- [Field Hockey Ontario Staff Concussion Code of Conduct \(applies to coaches, officials, and medical staff\)](#)
- [Government of Ontario Concussion Awareness Resource for ages 15 and up](#)
- [Government of Ontario Concussion Awareness Resource for ages 11-14](#)
- [Government of Ontario Concussion Awareness Resource for ages 10 and under](#)

In addition, successful completion of the free NCCP *Making Headway in Sport* online coach-training module is a mandatory requirement for any coach prior to participating in any FHO accredited event or program as of May 1, 2017. *Making Headway in Sport* is a prerequisite for all Field Hockey sport-specific coach education courses, and provides information on concussion prevention, identification, management, and return-to-play. It is recommended that all clubs require all coaches in club programs to complete the *Making Headway in Sport* module.

### *Designated Person(s)*

As of July 1st, 2020, in accordance with the requirements set out in *Rowan's Law* and its associated regulation, FHO is required to identify a designated person(s) as having specific responsibilities under the removal-from-sport and return-to-sport protocols. The responsibilities for the designated person(s) may be shared between one or more individuals.

FHO requires its designated charge person(s) to hold at a minimum a valid first responder certification. FHO will work to ensure that a certified athletic therapist, a registered physiotherapist with valid first responder and sport coverage experience, or a senior-level athletic therapy student is present and available at all FHO-accredited events to act as the Rowan's Law designated person, as this is already within their scope of practice. The designated person(s) must be able to administer a SCAT-5 (Sport Concussion Assessment Tool, Version 5) to an athlete with a suspected concussion. All designated persons will report to FHO's head athletic therapist, who will work to ensure FHO's Concussion Protocols are being initiated and followed.

Under *FHO's Removal-from-Sport protocol*, the designated person(s) is/are responsible for ensuring that:

- An athlete is immediately removed from further training, practice or competition if the athlete has sustained a concussion or is suspected of having sustained a concussion, regardless of whether or not the concussion was sustained from a sport activity associated with FHO;
- If in the opinion of the designated person(s), there is an emergency and/or any red flag signs and/or symptoms appear (including those resulting from a suspected concussion), to call 911;
- Removal of the athlete from further training, practice or competition; and if the athlete is under 18 years of age, the parent or guardian is informed of the removal;
- The athlete, or the parent or guardian if the athlete is under 18 years of age, is advised that the athlete is required to **undergo a medical assessment by a physician or nurse practitioner** before the athlete will be permitted to return to training, practice or competition according to FHO's Return-to-Sport Concussion Protocol;
- An athlete or, if the athlete is under 18 years of age, the athlete's parent or guardian receives *FHO's Removal-from-Sport and Return-to-Sport Concussion Protocols* as soon as possible after the athlete's removal;
- Once removed, the athlete is not permitted to return to training, practice or competition, except in accordance with *FHO's Return-to-Sport Concussion Protocol*.

Under *FHO's Return-to-Sport Concussion Protocol*, the designated person(s) is/are responsible for ensuring that:

- An athlete who has sustained a concussion or is suspected of having sustained a concussion does not return to training, practice or competition until permitted to do so in accordance with *FHO's Return-to-Sport Concussion Protocol*;
- When an athlete has **not** been diagnosed with a concussion, the athlete is only permitted to return to training, practice or competition if the athlete or, if the athlete is under 18 years of age, the athlete's parent or guardian provides **written** confirmation to the designated person(s) about the outcome of the athlete's medical assessment, specifically that the athlete:
  - has undergone a medical assessment by the physician or nurse practitioner and has **not** been diagnosed as having a concussion, and

- has been medically cleared to return to training, practice or competition by a physician or nurse practitioner;
- When an athlete **is** diagnosed by a physician or nurse practitioner as having a concussion, the athlete is not permitted to move on to unrestricted training, practice or competition unless the athlete or, if the athlete is under 18 years of age, the athlete's parent or guardian provides **written** confirmation of medical clearance by the physician or nurse practitioner to the designated person(s);
- An athlete is not permitted to return to training, practice or competition through *FHO's Graduated Return-to-Sport Steps* unless the athlete or, if the athlete is under 18 years of age, the athlete's parent or guardian has shared the medical advice or recommendations they received, if any, with the designated person(s);
- When an athlete is diagnosed by a physician or nurse practitioner as having a concussion, the athlete or, if the athlete is under 18 years of age, the athlete's parent/guardian has been informed of the importance of disclosing the diagnosis to any other sport organization with which the athlete is registered or school that the athlete attends.

The regulation states that a designated person(s) may rely on the information received from an athlete or, if the athlete is under 18 years of age, from the athlete's parent or guardian in carrying out their responsibilities under Field Hockey Ontario's Return-to-Sport Concussion Protocol.

### *Removal-from-Sport Protocol*

The following outlines the process for immediate removal of an athlete who is suspected of having sustained a concussion.

#### **1. Remove the Athlete**

- The designated person(s) is to immediately remove the athlete from further training, practice or competition if the athlete has sustained a concussion or is suspected of having sustained a concussion regardless of whether the concussion or suspected concussion was sustained from an activity associated with FHO.
- The attending designated person will complete (at a minimum) a SCAT-5 (Sport Concussion Assessment Tool, Version 5) with the athlete. Depending on the severity of the athlete's condition/symptoms, the SCAT-5 may or may not be completed fully.

#### **2. Call 9-1-1 if Emergency**

- Designated person(s) to call 9-1-1 if in their opinion, doing so is necessary (e.g., if there is an emergency and any red flag signs and/or symptoms appear). This is at the discretion of the designated person, which is why a valid first responder certification is required for the designated person. Remember, very few concussions will require 911 attention.

**Red Flags – if present, call 9-1-1**

Loss of consciousness **IMMEDIATE 9-1-1, regardless of what happened
ABCs compromised (Airway, Breathing, Circulation) **IMMEDIATE 9-1-1, regardless of what happened
Neck pain or tenderness, unwillingness to move head (spinal precautions)
Weakness and/or numbness/tingling into hands or feet (spinal precautions)
Severe or increasing headache
Double vision
Seizures/convulsions
Deteriorating conscious state
Vomiting
Altered mental state

### 3. Inform

- If the athlete is under 18 years of age, the designated person(s) is to inform the athlete's parent or guardian about the athlete's removal from further training, practice or competition.
- The athlete and (their parent/guardian if the athlete is under 18 years old) will receive a FHO Concussion Home Advice letter, outlining initial advice and next steps, including medical assessment requirements and return-to-play protocol.
- The designated person(s) is to advise the athlete, or the parent or guardian if the athlete is under 18 years of age, that the athlete is required to undergo a medical assessment by a physician or nurse practitioner before the athlete will be permitted to return to training, practice or competition.

A medical assessment determines whether the athlete has a concussion. An athlete will not be permitted to return to training, practice or competition until they receive **written** medical clearance by a **physician or nurse practitioner** to do so. Conveyance of verbal medical clearance **will not be accepted**.

### 4. Give Protocols

- Designated person(s) to provide the athlete or, if the athlete is under 18 years of age, the athlete's parent or guardian with Field Hockey Ontario's Removal-from-Sport and Return-to-Sport Concussion Protocols as soon as possible after the athlete has been removed from further training, practice or competition.

### 5. Record the Incident

- Make and keep a record of incidences where an athlete is removed from further training, practice or competition because they are suspected of having sustained a concussion regardless of whether the athlete is later diagnosed with a concussion.
- FHO will limit the collection, use, and disclosure of personal information to that which is reasonably necessary for the purpose of carrying out the sport organization's protocols, and to limit access to such personal information to only those individuals who require it for the purpose of fulfilling their duties or obligations under the Act. Personal information collected under this protocol

shall be retained, disclosed and disposed of in a secure manner and in accordance with FHO's personal information retention policy.

#### **6. Returning to Training, Practice or Competition**

- Once removed, the athlete is not permitted to return to training, practice or competition, except in accordance with *FHO's Return-to-Sport Concussion Protocol*.

#### *Return-to-Sport Protocol*

The following outlines a return-to-sport process for an athlete who has been removed from training, practice or competition due to a suspected or diagnosed concussion, regardless of whether or not the concussion was sustained or is suspected of having been sustained during a sport activity associated with FHO.

##### **1. Receive Confirmation of Athlete's Diagnosis/Status**

- FHO and the designated person(s) must ensure that an athlete who has sustained a concussion or is suspected of having sustained a concussion does not return to training, practice or competition until the athlete or, if the athlete is under 18 years of age, the athlete's parent or guardian provides **written** confirmation to the designated person(s) that the athlete:
  - a) Has undergone a medical assessment by a physician or nurse practitioner and has not been diagnosed as having a concussion, and
  - b) Has been medically cleared to return to training, practice or competition by the physician or nurse practitioner.
- Verbal conveyance of clearance or written confirmation of clearance from any other healthcare professional other than a physician or nurse practitioner **will not be accepted**. These other healthcare professionals (athletic therapists, physiotherapists, chiropractors, etc.) often play a crucial role in an athlete's recovery, however as per Rowan's Law, they are not able to provide clearance for athletes. It is recommended that these professionals continue to work with athletes as they progress through the return-to-play protocol, and advise the athlete's physician/nurse practitioner on the athlete's progress and readiness to return-to-play.

##### **2. Graduated Return-to-Sport Stages**

- If an athlete has been diagnosed by a physician or nurse practitioner as having a concussion the athlete must proceed through the graduated return-to-sport stages.
- It is important to note that typical recovery times vary from person to person, and that some individuals may require more time to progress through the graduated return-to-sport steps.
- The graduated return-to-sport steps may include the following activities. It is typically recommended that an athlete with concussion rest for 24 to 48 hours before beginning Stage 1.



- An athlete is typically ready to progress to the next stage when they can do the activities at their current step without new or worsening symptoms. If at any step symptoms get worse, they should stop and return to the previous step before trying again in 24 hours. If symptoms do not improve or if the symptoms continue to worsen, the athlete should return to the physician or nurse practitioner.

Stage	Activities	Goal of Stage
<b>STAGE 0:</b> Initial “Rest”	Visual rest, proper sleep hygiene. **Complete rest (ie. dark room, isolation) is no longer recommended. Rather, athletes can do activities that DO NOT provoke their symptoms. Any activity that provokes or aggravates symptoms must be stopped/avoided. Physical and cognitive rest is essential at this stage.	“reset” and rest
<b>STAGE 1:</b> Symptom-limiting activities	Daily activities that don’t make symptoms worse, such as moving around the home and simple chores	Gradual reintroduction of daily school, and work activities
<b>STAGE 2:</b> Light aerobic activity	Light activities such as walking or stationary bicycle at slow to medium pace for 10 to 15 minutes	Increase heart rate
<b>STAGE 3:</b> Sport-specific exercise	Individual physical activity such as running or skating No contact or head impact activities	Add movement
<b>STAGE 4:</b> Non-contact training, practice drills	Harder training drills Add resistance training (if appropriate)	Exercise, coordination and increased thinking
<b>STAGE 5:</b> Unrestricted Training & Practice	Unrestricted training and practice- with contact where applicable **Must obtain <u>written</u> clearance from physician or nurse practitioner before unrestricted training, practice, or competition	Restore confidence and assess functional skills
<b>STAGE 6:</b> Return-to-Sport	Unrestricted competition	Return to play

- A note on Return-to-School/Learn Plan (Learning & Physical Activity) – students in elementary and secondary school with a diagnosed concussion must follow their school board’s return-to-school plan, which supports a student’s gradual return to learning & return to physical activity. Contact the school for more information.

**3. Share Medical Advice with Designated Person(s)**

- An athlete, or the athlete's parent or guardian must share the medical advice or recommendations they receive with the designated person(s) before being permitted to return to training, practice or competition through the graduated return-to-sport steps, if any.

**4. Disclosing Diagnosis**

- The designated person(s) must inform the athlete or, if the athlete is under 18 years of age, the athlete's parent or guardian of the importance of disclosing the diagnosis to any other sport organization with which the athlete is registered or school that the athlete attends.

**5. Provide Proof of Medical Clearance**

- The athlete, or the athlete's parent or guardian must provide the designated person(s) a **written** confirmation of medical clearance by a physician or nurse practitioner before the athlete is permitted to move on to unrestricted training, practice or competition.
- Verbal conveyance of clearance or written confirmation of clearance from any other healthcare professional other than a physician or nurse practitioner **will not be accepted.**

**6. Record Progression**

- FHO and the designated person(s) must make and keep a record of the athlete's progression through the graduated return-to-sport stages until the athlete, or the athlete's parent or guardian, has provided written confirmation of medical clearance by a physician or nurse practitioner to the designated person(s).
- FHO's designated person(s) and head athletic therapist will utilize its Concussion Return-to-Play Athletic Progression Form to record and track an athlete's progression through each stage of the graduated return-to-play. This form will be included with the athlete's SCAT-5 and injury report, as well as any other pertinent documentation pertaining to the concussion incident.

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