

19.0 Compliance with Ohio Law Relating to Concussions in Youth Sports

19.1 In order to protect young athletes, the State of Ohio has passed a law regarding concussions in youth sports, commonly called the “Return to Play” law. This law, similar to laws enacted in most other states, imposes training, safety, and awareness requirements on youth sports organizations, like OSYSA, and its leagues, associations, tournaments, coaches, referees, officials, and athletes and their families.

A concussion is a brain injury and all brain injuries are serious. A concussion may be caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head, or by a blow to another part of the body with the force transmitted to the head. A concussion can range from mild to severe and can disrupt the way the brain normally works. Even though most concussions are mild, all concussions are potentially serious and may result in complications, including prolonged brain damage and death, if not recognized and managed properly.

Because of the significant health concerns posed by the risk of concussions and because of the Return to Play laws enacted by the State of Ohio, OSYSA is instituting the following policy that is applicable to all players, their parents/guardians, coaches, referees and league officials who participate in or organize any OSYSA sanctioned or sponsored activity, including tournaments, or in any sanctioned or organized activity of any of the member leagues or associations of OSYSA.

19.2 All OSYSA member leagues, associations, and OSYSA-sanctioned tournaments, must provide a copy of the Ohio Department of Health Concussion Information Sheet for Youth Sports Organizations to each parent, guardian, or other person having care or charge of a player participating in any OSYSA member league or association sanctioned practice, scrimmage, game, or OSYSA-sanctioned tournament, except as provided in Section 19.2.1.

In addition, where OSYSA organizes a player activity involving games or practices, including but not limited to: ODP, OSSL, MRL, USYS National League, State Cup, President’s Cup, Kohl’s Cup and OSYSA organized camps, OSYSA shall provide a copy of the Ohio Department of Health Concussion Information Sheet for Youth Sports Organizations to each parent, guardian, or other person having care or charge of a player participating in the OSYSA organized activity, except as provided in Section 19.2.1.

This form must be distributed at the time the player is first registered in an OSYSA organized activity, or is registered in an OSYSA member league or association, or participates in an OSYSA-sanctioned tournament but not less than yearly.

19.2.1 If a player has already registered with an OSYSA member league or association and then that player subsequently participates in an OSYSA organized activity or participates in an OSYSA-sanctioned tournament, the parents of the player need not be given the form described in the first two paragraphs of this Section 19.2 provided the member league that first registered the player complied with all provisions of Section 19 and has so verified such compliance with OSYSA.

However, any OSYSA member League or Association or OSYSA-sanctioned tournament may choose to provide the required information rather than rely on the certification as outlined above. OSYSA for its organized activities involving games and practices and OSYSA member leagues or associations and OSYSA-sanctioned tournament, may continue to distribute the ODH information sheet for parent and guardians, if they so desire.

19.3 All OSYSA member leagues, associations, and OSYSA-sanctioned tournaments, must provide a copy of the Ohio Department of Health Concussion Information sheet entitled “Ohio's Return-to-Play Law: What Coaches & Referees Need to Know – Youth Sports Organizations” to each coach or referee participating in any OSYSA member league or association sanctioned practice, scrimmage, game, or OSYSA-sanctioned tournament, except as provided in Section 19.3.1.

In addition, where OSYSA organizes a player activity involving games or practices, including but not limited to: ODP, OSSL, MRL, USYS National League, State Cup, President’s Cup, Kohl’s Cup and OSYSA organized camps, OSYSA shall provide a copy of the Ohio Department of Health Concussion Information Sheet entitled “Ohio's Return-to-Play Law: What Coaches & Referees Need to Know – Youth Sports Organizations” to each coach or referee participating in the OSYSA organized activity, except as provided in Section 19.3.1.

This form must be distributed at the time a coach is first registered in an OSYSA organized activity, or is registered in an OSYSA member league or association, or participates in an OSYSA-sanctioned tournament but not less than yearly.

19.3.1 If a coach has already been registered with an OSYSA member league or association and then that coach subsequently participates in an OSYSA organized activity or participates in an OSYSA-sanctioned tournament, the coach need not be given the form described in the first two paragraphs of this Section 19.3 provided the member league that first registered the coach has complied with all provisions of Section 19 and has so verified such compliance with OSYSA.

However, any OSYSA member League or Association or OSYSA-sanctioned tournament may choose to provide the required information rather than rely on the certification as outlined above.

OSYSA for its organized activities involving games and practices and OSYSA member leagues or associations and OSYSA-sanctioned tournament, may continue to distribute the ODH information sheet for coaches and referees, if they so desire.

19.4 All OSYSA member leagues, associations, and OSYSA-sanctioned tournaments must require each person acting as a coach, referee, or league official that supervises practice or competition, (regardless of whether that person is registered or is serving as a substitute) to complete an Ohio Department of Health approved concussion awareness training course.

In addition, each person acting as a coach, referee, or official (regardless of whether that person is registered or is serving as a substitute) in an OSYSA organized activity as described in the second paragraph of Section 19.2 must complete an Ohio Department of Health approved concussion awareness training course.

19.5 Coaches, referees, substitute coaches and club linesmen must provide evidence to the OSYSA member leagues or associations or to OSYSA-sanctioned tournament that they are in compliance with Ohio's Return to Play law and/or this Section 19 when participating in games and practices, except as provided in Sections 19.5.1 or 19.10. This section 19.5 applies to all coaches, referees, substitute coaches and club linesmen, both residents and non-residents of Ohio.

In addition, coaches, referees, substitute coaches and club assistant referees must provide evidence to OSYSA participating in OSYSA organized activities as described in the second paragraph of Section 19.2 that they are compliance with Ohio's Return to Play law and this Section 19 when participating in games and practices, except as provided in Sections 19.5.1 or 19.10. This section 19.5 applies to

all coaches, referees, substitute coaches and club assistant referees, both residents and non-residents of Ohio.

The evidence referred to in the preceding two paragraphs shall be a copy of their Certificate of Completion of one of two online concussion awareness training courses that are approved by the Ohio Department of Health and available at the web addresses shown in Section 19.14. Those courses are provided by the United States government's Center for Disease Control and The National Federation of High Schools. OSYSA member leagues, associations, OSYSA-sanctioned tournaments and OSYSA for its organized activities involving games and practices, may limit its participants to using one or the other or allow the use of both of the above listed concussion awareness training courses.

19.5.1 Any coach who is registered with an OSYSA member league or association and subsequently participates in an OSYSA-sanctioned tournament, or other OSYSA organized event is not required to provide a copy of their Certificate of Completion, provided that the OSYSA member league or association that registered the coach has verified that the coach has complied with all provisions of this Section 19 and has so verified such compliance to OSYSA.

However, any OSYSA member League or Association or OSYSA-sanctioned tournament may choose to require the individual to provide the required Concussion Certification information rather than rely on the certification as outlined above.

OSYSA for its organized activities involving games and practices and OSYSA member leagues or associations and OSYSA-sanctioned tournament, may continue to require all coaches registered within their programs to provide evidence that the coach has completed the state mandated concussion awareness training course, if they so desire.

This entire Section 19 shall also apply to Directors of Coaching and trainers regardless of whether they are an OSYSA registered coach or not.

Coaches and referees are encouraged to maintain copies of the evidence of their completion of the required Ohio Department of Health approved concussion awareness training course in compliance with Ohio's Return to Play law and this Section 19 for a minimum of four years.

19.6 If a player, during any game or practice, exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with having sustained a concussion or head injury, the player must be removed from play by either the individual who is serving as the player's coach, the referee, or a league official that is supervising the practice or competition.

Once a player has been removed from play because of a suspected concussion or head injury, that player shall not return to play that same day. The player shall not return to play until he/she has been evaluated by and received written clearance including the signature and occupation of a physician or another licensed health care provider authorized pursuant to Section 19.7 to grant such clearance.

OSYSA, OSYSA member leagues, associations, or OSYSA-sanctioned tournaments that register players must establish a method by which they ensure that a player does not return to play in any soccer related activity under their control until the player has received the written clearance as required by Sections 19.6 and 19.7. This requirement applies to the current season as well as subsequent seasons.

If a player has been issued a player pass, the most effective means will be to hold the player pass until the clearance form required by this section is received by the entity that organized the game or practice where the player was believed to exhibit signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with having sustained a concussion or head injury.

If a player is removed from play in the player's last game or practice of an OSYSA organized activity or OSYSA-sanctioned tournament as outlined in this Section 19.6, the player's player pass and / or other registration material shall be returned to the member league which initially registered the player.

If a player has exhibited signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with having sustained a concussion or head injury during an activity that is unrelated to their participation in:

- an OSYSA organized activity involving games and practices as described in Section 19.2 or
- an activity related their participation with a OSYSA member league or association or
- related to their participation in an OSYSA-sanctioned tournament,

it shall be the responsibility of the player's parent/guardian to notify the appropriate soccer entity of the status of their child as it relates to the player who has previously exhibited signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with having sustained a concussion or head injury, if the player has not been granted written medical clearance as required by Ohio law.

Likewise, if a player has exhibited signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with having sustained a concussion or head injury during a soccer related activity as outlined in the preceding paragraph, it shall be the responsibility of the player's parent/guardian to notify the appropriate non-soccer entity of the status of their child as it relates to the player who has previously exhibited signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with having sustained a concussion or head injury if the player has not been granted written medical clearance as required by Ohio law.

19.7 OSYSA and OSYSA member leagues, associations, and OSYSA-sanctioned tournaments may, in advance, authorize persons in the following types of health care occupations the authority to grant a clearance for purposes of Section 19.6. Other types of health care providers, (who are not listed below) may not grant a clearance for purposes of Section 19.6:

- a physician, (M.D. or D.O.)
- an athletic trainer whose work is supervised by a physician,
- a physician assistant
- a nurse practitioner

OSYSA and OSYSA member leagues, associations, and OSYSA-sanctioned tournaments must keep the clearance forms described in Section 19.6 for a minimum of 3 years after their receipt.

19.8 All out-of-state teams, coaches, players, referees, and officials must comply with Ohio's laws, as set forth in Ohio Revised Code Section 3707.511, and OSYSA's concussion policy, as set forth in this Section 19, in all practices, scrimmages, games, and tournaments conducted in Ohio. This specifically includes but is not limited to teams who are attending:

- OSYSA sanctioned tournaments,
- USYS National League games,
- MRL games
- Regional Cup
- National Championship games

from outside the territory of OSYSA, players, coaches and/or referees who are not residents of Ohio but who participate in leagues, or the above activities within the boundaries of the State of Ohio.

OSYSA for OSYSA organized activities and OSYSA-sanctioned tournaments may consider Sections 19.2.1, 19.3.1 and 19.5.1, when organizing their event. OSYSA for OSYSA organized activities, OSYSA member leagues and associations and OSYSA-sanctioned tournaments shall remain responsible for being in compliance with all aspects of Ohio law relating to concussions in youth sports and this Section 19 including but not limited to out-of-state teams, coaches, players, referees, and officials as well as players and coaches associated with United States Soccer Federation affiliates other than the Ohio South Youth Soccer Association and players or coaches who have not previously registered in OSYSA during that seasonal year, i.e. tournament guest players and / or independent players participating in ODP.

19.9 If a player is exhibiting or has exhibited the signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with having sustained a concussion or head injury, the opinion of the person, (parent, coach, referee or league official that is supervising that practice or competition), who believes that a player is exhibiting the signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with having sustained a concussion or head injury shall prevail. This shall mean that the determination by a player's parent, a player's coach, a referee, and/or a league official that is supervising that practice or competition that a player is exhibiting or has exhibited the signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with having sustained a concussion or head injury cannot be overruled by any other person.

OSYSA and OSYSA member leagues, associations, and OSYSA-sanctioned tournaments shall keep a copy of the evidence that all coaches and referees are required to provide to OSYSA and OSYSA member leagues, associations, and OSYSA-sanctioned tournaments for a period of not less than four years after their receipt by OSYSA or OSYSA member leagues, associations, or OSYSA-sanctioned tournaments.

19.10 Upon certification by the Ohio South State Referee Committee, (a.k.a. OSSRC), to OSYSA that all referees who have been granted USSF referee certification through OSSRC are in compliance with the requirements of Ohio law relating to concussions in youth sports and this Section 19, and have provided appropriate documentation to that effect, then OSYSA for OSYSA organized activities, OSYSA member leagues and associations and OSYSA-sanctioned tournaments may consider such certification when determining their compliance with Sections 19.2, 19.3 and 19.5.

OSYSA shall notify OSSRC, that OSYSA, OSYSA member leagues and associations and OSYSA sanctioned tournaments shall be relying upon OSSRC's assertion that all USSF certified referees within OSSRC's designated territory are in compliance with the requirements of Ohio law relating to concussions in youth sports and this Section 19.

19.10.1 OSYSA for its organized activities, OSYSA member leagues and associations, including both competitive and recreational leagues, and OSYSA sanctioned tournaments shall be permitted to consider the use of this Section 19.10 only for those referees that they use that are USSF certified referees through OSSRC.

OSYSA, OSYSA member leagues and associations, including both competitive and recreational leagues, and OSYSA sanctioned tournaments, which choose to use referees who have not been certified as referees through OSSRC shall remain responsible for being in compliance with all aspects of Ohio law regarding concussions in youth sports and this section 19.

19.11 No coach, referee, substitute coach or club assistant referee shall be required to demonstrate or prove to any other coach, referee, substitute coach, club assistant referee, player or parent of a player, that they are in compliance with the requirements of Ohio’s “Return to Play” law and this Section 19.

19.12 Only coaches of teams that they are a registered coach for, or a referee officiating a game, or a league official that is supervising a game or practice, shall have standing to make an official determination as to whether or not a player on their team is exhibiting the signs, symptoms or behaviors of a person who may have sustained a concussion under the requirements of Ohio’s “Return to Play” law and this Section 19.

19.13 OSYSA for its organized activities where players participate in games and practices, and each OSYSA member league, association, and each OSYSA-sanctioned tournament must implement appropriate policies to reasonably ensure that the requirements of Ohio law relating to concussions in youth sports and this Section 19 are met.

19.14 OSYSA will place on its website links to the Ohio Department of Health website which designates approved concussion training courses as well as additional information related to prevention and treatment of concussions in youth sports.

Currently, the Ohio Department of Health website is:
<http://www.healthyohioprogram.org/concussion>

The Ohio Department of Health approved online concussion training course may be viewed at:
<http://www.nfhslearn.com/electiveDetail.aspx?courseID=38000>
http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/online_training.html

If the above listed website addresses change, their replacement addresses shall apply.