

ALABAMA SOCCER ASSOCIATION Concussion Policy

In order to ensure compliance with Section 22-11E-2 of the *Code of Alabama* (1975) and the provisions of U.S. Soccer's Recognize to Recover Program, the Alabama Soccer Association (hereinafter "ASA") hereby enacts this policy pertaining to the nature, risk, prevention, and treatment of concussions and other brain injuries. Nothing in this policy shall prohibit affiliate clubs and leagues from adopting concussion management policies or programs with greater requirements than those specified herein.

I. Policy Objectives:

1. Reduce concussion risks for participants in ASA affiliated clubs and leagues;
2. Increase awareness of concussion risks, concussion effects, and their proper management for participants in ASA affiliated clubs and leagues;
3. Comply with Alabama law, which requires governing bodies of sport or recreational organizations to develop guidelines regarding the identification and handling of suspected concussions in youth athletes;
4. Reduce legal risks to ASA and its affiliated clubs and leagues.

II. Education/Compliance:

- A. **Adults Affiliated with ASA:** All coaches, assistant coaches, team trainers, team managers, referees, club representatives league representatives, ASA administrators, ASA Board of Directors members, contract labor employees, or any other individual seeking affiliation with ASA or ASA affiliated clubs or leagues must complete a concussion awareness online training program. The required training program is the Heads-Up Concussion Training provided by the US Center for Disease Control (CDC). The training needs to be completed once by each individual before participating in any soccer related activities. The online training has been integrated into the ASA online background check. Each individual is responsible for his or her compliance with the online training. The Heads-Up Concussion Training can be found on the ASA website or at: <http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/Training>

Following his or her completion of the concussion awareness online training program described above, each adult described above shall, on an annual basis, review the concussion guidelines set forth by U.S. Soccer as part of its Recognize to Recover initiative, as well as any video distributed by U.S. Soccer that addresses concussion detection and prevention.

- B. Player Participants and Parents:** Each ASA affiliate club shall provide the parents or guardians of each player participant, on an annual basis, information on the nature and risk of concussions, criteria for removal and return to play, and risks of not reporting the injury and continuing to play. The club shall require each parent or guardian to sign a Parent and Athlete Concussion Information Sheet acknowledging receipt of such information and shall maintain such document for the duration of the player participant's involvement with the organization or until the player participant is 18 years of age.
1. For purposes of meeting the requirements of this section, an affiliate club may provide coaches and parents with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) concussion fact sheets for coaches and parents found at the CDC "HEADS UP To Youth Sports" website: <http://www.cdc.gov/headsup/youthsports/index.html>. Clubs may also provide coaches and parents with copies of the concussion guidelines established by U.S. Soccer as part of its Recognize to Recover initiative.
 2. As part of this policy on concussion education, ASA encourages, but does not require, affiliate clubs to provide other means of periodically providing information on concussions to their coaches, players and parents, including meetings, seminars, discussion forums, online resources, handouts and other forms of communication.

III. Heading:

ASA has eliminated heading for players U11 and younger. This directive is to protect players 10 years old and younger regardless of what age group they are playing in. A purposeful header by these players shall result in an indirect free kick awarded to the opponent at the spot of the infraction. This mandate is for all ASA affiliated activities, including but not limited to, ASA affiliated member organization league play, practices and tournaments. ASA recommends limiting the amount of heading in practice for players in U12 and U13 programs be limited to a maximum of 30 minutes per week with no more than 15-20 headers per player, per week. (No limit on heading in games.) In addition, ASA recommends that all coaches be instructed to teach and emphasize the importance of proper techniques for heading the ball.

IV. Head Impact Protocol:

- A. Each ASA affiliate club and league shall have a protocol in place to govern procedures for any situation in which a participant in the club's or league's athletic programs or activities (including games, practices, skill sessions and other athletic activities) is suspected of having incurred a potential concussion as a result of a head or neck impact or other impact that could lead to a concussion.

- B. Such protocol shall, at a minimum, set forth (I) a procedure for immediate removal of the player participant from the activity to be evaluated for symptoms of a concussion; (ii) a procedure for a coach, club official, club representative, trainer or medical professional to evaluate the player participant for symptoms of a concussion; and (iii) a requirement that the player participant not be permitted to return to play or any other athletic activity on that day if the player participant exhibits any symptoms of a concussion.

V. Return To Play:

- A. If a player participant in a affiliate club's activities is removed from play due to exhibiting symptoms of a concussion, he or she may not return to any athletic activity of the club until a licensed healthcare provider has provided the club with written clearance for the player participant to resume such activities. This provision does not prohibit a player participant from attending games, practices and other activities without participating athletically in such activities.
- B. Each affiliate club of ASA is required to maintain records of medical clearances for all player participants for seven years.
- C. For purposes of this provision, a "licensed healthcare provider" means a physician, physician assistant, osteopath physician, or athletic trainer licensed by the Alabama Board of Medicine; a neuropsychologist licensed by the Board of Psychology; or a nurse practitioner licensed by the Alabama State Board of Nursing. Although not required, ASA recommends that its affiliate clubs encourage players with suspected concussions to see a licensed healthcare professional with significant experience treating concussions, and further recommends that its affiliate clubs provide their players, parents and coaches with information concerning licensed healthcare providers in their locales who have such experience.

VI. Baseline Testing:

- A. It is ASA's policy to encourage, but not require, affiliate clubs to adopt a program of baseline testing for older player participants to facilitate the return to play when a concussion occurs.
- B. Baseline testing is an exam conducted by trained professionals to help assess a person's brain functioning (including learning and memory skills, ability to pay attention or concentrate, and how quickly a person thinks and solves problems) at a given point in time. The results of such a test can be compared to a similar exam if a concussion has occurred, to help evaluate whether the injured player is ready to return to play.

- C. ASA recommends that affiliate clubs establish procedures for player participants to obtain baseline testing starting as early as age 10, with periodic re-testing as player participants grow older.

VII. Health Care Professionals:

ASA has adopted US Soccer’s recommendation on an adequate number of Health Care Professionals (HCP) being present for all tournaments with 64 or more teams at U11 and older age groups. Health Care Professionals are considered an Athletic Trainer Certified (ATC) or Physician (MD/DO), with skills in emergency care, sports medicine injuries and experience related to concussion evaluation and management.

VIII. Concussion Resources:

ASA has posted many helpful resources regarding concussions and youth participation on ASA’s website. Relevant materials can be found on the Risk Management tab of the ASA website. ASA affiliate clubs and leagues should feel free to use any of this literature for their own organization.

IX. Indemnification:

ASA, its employees, agents, volunteers and all those acting on behalf of ASA are not responsible for or liable for affiliate clubs, leagues, player participants, parents of player participants, and/or other adults identified in Section II(A) above who do not comply with the ASA Concussion Policy. All such adults and the parents/guardians of player participants agree to indemnify and hold ASA harmless against all losses, damages, costs, and expenses, including reasonable attorney fees, resulting from a failure to comply with the ASA Concussion Policy. Affiliation with ASA is contingent upon agreement with the above sentence as well as total compliance with this policy as written.

X. Amendments and Changes:

The ASA Board of Directors reserves the right to update, modify, or change this policy at any time without notice.