

GEORGIA SOCCER POLICY ON CONCUSSION AWARENESS AND RETURN TO PLAY  
GUIDELINES  
ADOPTED JULY 27, 2013

GENERAL POLICY STATEMENT

It shall be the policy of Georgia Soccer to require that all parents/legal guardians of youth players, along with all registered youth coaches be informed on the subject of concussive injury to players and to the best practices available for diagnosis and treatment for this potentially serious medical condition. This policy shall require all members to follow all Federal, State, and local legal requirements including, but not limited to, the removal from play of any youth player suspected to have had a severe head injury of any type. This Georgia Soccer policy will remain subservient to any and all future Federal, state, local laws and regulations as well as any established National Youth Soccer policy.

Georgia Soccer asks parents, coaches, volunteer and paid staff, game officials, and club administrators to be vigilant in the area of player safety for all potentially serious types of injuries, including head, neck, and spine areas. Concussions, also referred to as traumatic brain injuries (TBI), are particularly dangerous to the youth athlete as the brain is still undergoing significant growth up to and during the teenage years.

It shall be the policy of Georgia Soccer to require that, at the time of registration, all member Affiliates inform the parents or guardians of each youth player of the general signs and symptoms of potential concussive injury.

Georgia Soccer and its member Affiliate soccer clubs are united in their dedication to the safety of all players involved in the sport of soccer. As a member of the Georgia Concussion Coalition since 2011, Georgia Soccer has worked to support the safety of all youth athletes from the effects of a concussive injury and, as a result, the State of Georgia enacted the 'Return To Play Act of 2013' in April, 2013.

Further educational and other reference resources are available on the Georgia Soccer Risk Management website.

I. BEST PRACTICES

Georgia Soccer strongly encourages all member clubs to implement a "Return to Play" policy for all suspected head injuries. This local policy should follow the suggested GEORGIA SOCCER CONCUSSION PROTOCOL that's found on the Georgia Soccer Risk Management website. When any coach or other local affiliate representative suspects any player of having received a possible concussion injury they will formally report this possibility to the player's parent or legal guardian using the 'GEORGIA SOCCER NOTIFICATION OF POSSIBLE CONCUSSION' form.

Parents/legal guardians of Youth players previously notified of having a suspected concussion by their coach/affiliate official will be required to submit a signed confirmation (GEORGIA SOCCER RETURN TO PLAY AUTHORIZATION form) to that coach/affiliate official that confirms the parent/guardian has “cleared” the player to return to play, including an acknowledgement by the parent/legal guardian that a professional medical opinion should be considered by the parent/legal guardian before submitting such an authorization.

Affiliate Clubs are strongly encouraged to review existing current best practices on the reasonable recognition and treatment of injuries and related medical issues, including emergency plans for handling access and medical transport, posted emergency information at practice and game sites, training and certification of those staff scheduled to be on site.

Clubs are strongly encouraged to review their local training practices to better prevent and treat head injury.

At the time of registration, “CONCUSSION AWARENESS” information will be made available to the players’ parents and guardians.

A specific acknowledgement by the players’ parent/legal guardian of having been provided access to the “CONCUSSION AWARENESS” information must be received by the local affiliate during that same registration process. The local Affiliate is responsible for maintaining the records of the parent’s/legal guardian’s acknowledgement.

All coaches, new and returning, (paid and volunteer) are strongly encouraged to take training, as provided by the CDC (see Risk Management web page for reference) in the area of current concussion awareness practices. Affiliate clubs should inform their coaches of this policy and the “PROTOCOL” and “NOTIFICATION” guidelines provided on the Risk Management web page. The local Affiliate is responsible for maintaining records of this annual coach training.

State youth Coaches’ certification Courses should be reviewed periodically to be up-to-date on the subject of handling suspected concussive injuries.

Affiliates are encouraged to implement this policy by Fall 2013 and to fully comply by Spring 2014 registration.

Questions should be directed to the Risk Management Committee.