Concussion Policy and Procedures

Foxborough Regional Charter School seeks to prevent concussions and provide a safe return to activity for all students after an injury, particularly after a head injury. In accordance with MA regulation 105 CMR 201, in order to effectively and consistently manage head injuries, the Athletic Department abides by documented procedures that have been developed to aid in ensuring that concussed athletes who are identified, treated and referred appropriately, receive appropriate follow-up medical care during the school day, including academic assistance, and are fully recovered prior to returning to athletic activity.

FRCS has designated the Director of Students and Families, or his/her designee, who has administrative authority to oversee the implementation of these policies and protocols governing the prevention and management of sports-related head injuries. In addition, the Director of Students and Families, or his/her designee, will be responsible for:

1. Supporting and enforcing the protocols, documentation, training and reporting outlined in these procedures;
2. Supervising and reviewing that all documentation is in place;
3. Reviewing, updating, and implementing policy every two years and including updates in annual training and student/parent handbook.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts requires annual safety training on prevention, identification, and management of a sports-related injury including head trauma and second impact syndrome for designated school personnel as well as parents or legal guardians of children who participate in any extracurricular athletic activity. This annual safety training shall be required for FRCS coaches, volunteers, school nurses, Athletic Director, parent/guardian of a child who participates in an extracurricular athletic activity, and student who participates in an extracurricular activity. While not required by MA Department of Public Health (MDPA), FRCS also offers this training physical education teachers, health teachers, and other school personnel.

This training effort shall be in collaboration with the athletic department and documentation of such training will be provided to the Athletic Director for maintenance in a central file.

The training used by FRCS for school staff, parents/guardians, and student athletes is the MDPH approved online training course listed below. It is available free of charge and lasts only about 30 minutes.


The training materials are available at FRCS’s website (www.foxboroughrcs.org) on the athletic department’s page, and hard copies are available in the athletic department office, and school nurse office.

FRCS’s Athletic Director is responsible for ensuring that the training requirements for staff, parents, coaches, and students are met, recorded, and records are maintained.

The certificate of completion of the annual training through the on-line course will be kept on file by the Athletic Director, including staff, students, and parents.
Each student athlete must have a physical examination on an annual basis, i.e. within 12 or 13 months of the student’s last physical examination. Any student athlete who does not have a current physical on file with the nurse, prior to the 1st day of try-outs, is not eligible until a new/updated physical is submitted. If the student’s physical examination expires during the sports season, he/she must have an updated physical examination to continue to participate in the sports season. A new sports physical form must be filled out every fall or prior to participating in the student’s first sport of the season and submitted to the school nurse even if the information has not changed.

The Massachusetts concussion law requires athletes and their parents to inform coaches about prior head injuries at the beginning of each sports season. This reporting is done via the Pre-participation Head Injury/Concussion Reporting Form and should be completed by the student’s parent(s) or legal guardian(s) and the student. It must be submitted to FRCS’s Athletic Director prior to the start of each season a student plans to participate in extracurricular athletic activity. This form provides a comprehensive history with up-to-date information relative to concussion history. This form is designed to ensure that particular attention is paid to identifying athletes with a history of brain or spinal injuries. Until the pre-participation form is completed and signed by the parent/guardian and student and returned to the school prior to the start of every sports season, the student cannot participate in the extracurricular sports activity.

**History of multiple concussions on pre-participation form:** The decision to allow a player who reported a history of multiple concussions on her/his pre-participation form should be made only after consultation with the student’s physician or primary care provider; the sports medicine or concussion specialist, if involved; the neuropsychologist, if involved, and the appropriate school athletic staff and the parent. Current evidence indicates that youth who have suffered one or more concussions are more likely to suffer a subsequent one. Options may include switching positions, limiting contact in practices, or changing sports altogether to minimize the risk of re-injury. The focus of FRCS will always be on protecting the health and safety of the student and avoiding long term consequences that can occur from repeated concussions.

**Collection/Distribution of pre-participation forms:** FRCS has the pre-participation forms available electronically at the school’s website under the athletic department. Hard copies are also available at the nursing office and with the Athletic Director.

The parent/student can fax, mail or hand-deliver the completed and signed pre-participation form to the Athletic Director which will forward a copy to the Nurse Leader.

At the start of each sports season, the Athletic Director will review all pre-participation forms and forward to the school nurse those forms indicating a history of head injury. The Nurse Leader will be responsible for:

- Reviewing or having the school physician review completed participation forms.
- Addressing any questions raised by the Athletic Director.
- Communicating with the coach regarding the student’s concussion history and discussing concerns.
- Following up with parents and students as needed prior to the student’s participation in extracurricular athletic activities.

The following procedures will be followed when an athlete receives a head injury:

- Athlete is removed from the contest or practice.
• Coach completes the Report of Head Injury during Sports Season Form and informs parent/guardian.
• Coach will give the form to the Athletic Director.
• Athletic Director will notify the Nurse Leader who will review the form.
• Nurse Leader will contact student-athlete’s teachers and guidance counselor.

At FRCS, head injuries or suspected concussions (after a bump, blow or jolt to the head or body) sustained during extracurricular athletic activities must be reported by the coach as soon as possible to the Nurse Leader and the Athletic Director. Athletes who experience signs or symptoms of a concussion should not be allowed to return to play.

In the event that a student athlete receives a head injury, or is suspected of having a head injury, the student will be removed from play and will not be returned to play or practice that day. The coach should report the head injury to the certified athletic trainer or Nurse Leader as soon as possible, for medical assessment and management and for coordination of home instructions and follow-up care. The coach will be responsible for contacting the athlete’s parents/guardians and the Nurse Leader will follow up with parents/guardians. If the athlete is injured at an away event, the coaching staff is responsible for notifying the parents of the injury and, if warranted, calling for emergency care. Coaches should seek assistance from the host site Athletic Director, coach, or school nurse.

If the athlete is able to be sent home (rather than directly to MD): the coach will ensure that the athlete will be with a responsible adult, who is capable of monitoring the athlete and understanding the home care instructions, before allowing the athlete to go home; the coach will continue efforts to reach the parents; if there is any question about the status of the athlete, or if the athlete is not able to be monitored appropriately, the athlete will be referred to the emergency department for evaluation. A coach will accompany the athlete and remain with the athlete until the parent/guardian arrives and; athletes with suspected head injuries will not be permitted to drive home.

Following a diagnosed concussion made by a health care provider, the student athlete will take a post-injury test within 24 to 48 hours following the head injury. Student athletes will not be allowed to move onto functional/physical testing until their ImPACT test is back to the baseline score and they are asymptomatic. After a student athlete takes their first post-injury test, they will not be re-tested again for 5 days.

If after the first post-injury ImPACT test the athlete is not back to his/her baseline, the parent/guardian will be notified, and the student athlete will be referred back to their healthcare provider and must have the Concussion Information and Gradual Return to Play form signed by a physician, licensed neuropsychologist, or nurse practitioner stating when the athlete is allowed to return to play.

Following a post-injury test, the Athletic Director will take the Concussion Information and Gradual Return to Play form signed by the parent/guardian and fill in the date of all post-injury tests taken by each student athlete.

The Athletic Director will also document the date on which the athlete is asymptomatic and sign the document agreeing that all the above statements are true and accurate.

Once the athlete completes the exertional post concussions tests, the parent/legal guardian will be notified and the athlete will be sent home with all signed documents relating to head injury. At this time the parent/guardian must bring the student athlete to a licensed physician, licensed
neuropsychologist, or nurse practitioner to be medically cleared for participation in extracurricular athletic activities.

FRCS requires that all students returning to school after a concussion have a written plan for reentry. School staff, such as teachers, school nurses, counselors, administrators, coaches and others can be a part of the plan development and will help to implement the coordination of the plan with the parent/guardian and the primary care provider. FRCS recognizes that a student may need accommodations to help him/her with academic work and to be successful in the classroom. While FRCS will not change the expectations of mastery for a course, all reasonable accommodations may be implemented to help the student access the curriculum and continue to learn.

Following are steps FRCS staff will take:

- **Determining the scope of the student’s need and the medical implications**: Upon receipt of medical information relating to a concussion, an FRCS nurse, guidance counselor or 504 coordinator will collaborate with the student and family to determine a course of action that meets the students’ needs.

- **Following up with physician with specific questions**: Upon receipt of requested accommodations from the physician, the school may submit a follow up letter to the doctor for clarification and specification on the student’s abilities and needs.

- **Individualized plan to support student’s academic workload**: After receiving all information from the doctor, if accommodations are recommended, the school will work with the student and family to create a written accommodation plan to help the student access the curriculum that will be shared with teachers and relevant staff. Guidance counselor, nurse, or 504 Coordinator will monitor the student’s progress and adapt the plan with doctor’s input if necessary.

- **Auditing courses as a means of supporting a limited academic load**: After discussing a medically diagnosed concussion with the family, during the period while the student is deemed unable to produce work or in need of limited neurological stimuli, a student may be slated to AUDIT all or some classes (Auditing a class refers to attending class and participating where possible but not submitting graded assignments). Nurse, 504 Coordinator or Guidance Counselor will communicate to the grade level team of that student to identify which classes will be audited and which will be for full participation/assignments/credit, etc. This is a very short term response the school may implement.

Once a student athlete’s post-injury test is back at the student athlete’s baseline score, he/she will go through 5 days of Exertional Post Concussion Tests. The student diagnosed with a concussion must be completely symptom free at rest in order to begin graduated reentry to extracurricular athletic activities. The student must be symptom free at rest, during exertion, and with cognitive activity in order to complete the graduated re-entry plan and be medically cleared to play under 105 CMR 201.011.

Return to play will occur only after the following steps have been completed, in the order listed below:


2. Post injury ImPACT test completed when athlete returns to school. Post injury ImPACT test must be back to baseline before continuing with the Physical Post Concussion Tests. Parent/Guardian will be notified, and athlete referred to their health care provider, if first post injury ImPACT test will continue every five days until baseline is attained.

3. Athletic Director verifies that the Physical Post Injury Test were administered and the athlete was asymptomatic. Athlete must finish Physical Post Injury Testes, even if athlete has been cleared by their health care provider.
4. Athlete may not participate in practice or play until written clearance by an appropriate health care professional: physician (MD, DO), physician assistant (PA) as long as the PA has taken and can verify completion of DPH-approved training in post-traumatic head injury assessment and management or have received equivalent training as part of their licensure of continuing education, or nurse practitioner (NP) with completion of the Physical Post Injury Tests.

5. Completed signature form returned to Athletic Director.

6. Athlete reads and signs the Concussion Information.

7. Athletic Director notifies the coach and gives copies of completed form to Nurse Leader.

Parents/Guardians and students who plan to participate in any athletic program at FRCS must also take a free online course. An online course is available and contains all the information required by the law. The course is available through the Centers for Disease Control at www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/online_training.html.

If an athlete sustains a sports-related head injury, including a suspected concussion, the coach, Athletic Director, or Nurse Leader will notify parents immediately and appropriate school staff within 24 hours of evaluating or learning of the injury. This protocol is the same for all home and away athletic events.

At FRCS, parents and students are oriented about the protocol on obtaining medical clearance for return to play after a diagnosed concussion. In addition, our athletic handbook under the section for “Sports Concussions” contains our policy and procedures regarding sports concussions including obtaining medical clearance after a concussion. The school’s website under the Athletic Department has a page on sports concussions that also details these protocols. Finally, parents and students can always call the Athletic Director or Nurse Leader to get further clarification or ask questions. No student will be allowed to return to play athletic activities until the medical clearance form is signed by authorized medical professional, submitted and reviewed by the Nurse Leader.

Parents/Guardians are required to submit the pre-participation form, signed by both student and parent, which provides a comprehensive history with up-to-date information relative to concussion history. It is the parent’s responsibility to tell all the student’s coaches and school nurses if the student has ever had a concussion via this form. In addition, our athletic handbook under the section for “Sports Concussion” includes our policies regarding sports concussions including the requirement to complete the pre-participation form by the student and parent at the start of every sports season. The Athletic Department’s page on the school’s website also details these protocols. These forms need to be submitted to the athletic department prior to the student trying out for a sport. These forms are reviewed by the Nurse Leader. At the beginning of every sports season, no student will be allowed to participate in athletic activities until the pre-participation form is signed, submitted by parent and student and reviewed by designated staff annually.

FRCS has recently modified its student/parent handbook and athletic handbook that is available on the school website and are distributed at the beginning of each school year to contain:

- Most recent concussion information fact sheet.
- Links and information about annual training.
- Policy and procedures on sports-related head injuries.

Our handbooks with updated information sports-related concussion information are updated every other year and are also available on the school’s website.
Because of limited English skills, some parents may be unable to communicate with school personnel and may feel isolated from the school community. FRCS makes every attempt to communicate effectively with parents with limited English proficiency. FRCS has a translator on the school’s website which allows parents to translate any document into their primary language. FRCS will translate other materials as requested. In the event a student receives a concussion or is suspected of having a concussion, the Athletic Director should notify the parent in the appropriate language.

Student athletes at FRCS will not be permitted to participate in extracurricular sports activities until both the parent and student have completed and returned the signed Pre-Participation Head Injury/Concussion Reporting Form before the start of every sports season. In the event the school has not received the required forms, including documentation of an annual physical examination, the student athlete will not be allowed to try out, play or practice until the appropriate required signed and completed forms are returned to the Athletic Director. If try outs have been completed prior to the student submitting all required forms, the student will be ineligible for that sports season.

Informal collaboration occurs on a temporary, as-needed basis for information exchange, as when the school nurse informs (while adhering to protocols for confidentiality) the physical education teacher that a particular student may not participate in athletic activities because of a recent injury. There may be circumstances in which there is a need to share information in the student health record with authorized school personnel—either to enhance the educational progress of the student or protect his/her safety or well-being. For example, staff may need to be alerted to signs or symptoms of a medical problem on a need to know basis and offered a course of action. This type of disclosure should be made only to those authorized school personnel who work directly with the student in an instructive (academic or athletic), administrative, or diagnostic capacity. Finally, authorized school personnel should be instructed not to re-disclose the information.

If there is any question about the sensitivity of the information, the school nurse should seek the permission of the parent/guardian and student, if appropriate, prior to disclosure to authorized school personnel. Ultimately, however, federal regulations permit in the student health record to be seen by authorized school personnel on a need to know basis, and the basis for such sharing seems even more compelling when necessary to protect the well-being of the student.

There may be times when a school nurse has the legal obligation to disclose health or related information to protect a student’s health or safety. Public policy requires the protection of a patient’s right to privacy by medical professionals, unless there is an immediate threat or serious harm to the student or others.

Coaches of FRCS are expected to be current with best practices in their sport that reduce the likelihood of head injury. In addition, coaches are prohibited from teaching or promoting dangerous practices. It is expected that all coaches and athletic department staff teach techniques that minimize sports injury and/or concussion such as proper fitting and protective equipment.

FRCS takes the safety of student athletes seriously. All members of the school staff are expected to follow these policies and procedures to support the health and safety of student athletes. The underlying philosophy of these procedures is “when in doubt, sit them out.” Failure to comply with the letter or spirit of these procedures could result in progressive discipline for staff and/or forfeiture of games. If students or parents have concerns that the policies are being violated, they should contact the Director of Students and Families.