

## **IC 20-34-7: Concussion Requirements, Certification Courses for Football Coaches, Certification Courses for Interscholastic Coaches**

### **Frequently Asked Questions** (Updated June 2018)

**Q: Have there been any recent changes to the Concussion Law (IC 20-34-7)?**

A: Yes. HEA 1024 requires that head coaches and assistant coaches of students in grades 5-12 who participate in interscholastic sports, including cheerleading, must take a “prevention and response to heat related medical issues” certification course (effective as of December 31, 2018). This is a new requirement and is in addition to the concussion certification course that was required per SEA 234 which took effect July 1, 2017.

**Q: What are the requirements for this heat related certification course?**

A: The course must be approved by the Indiana Department of Education, include a test that demonstrates comprehension of the course content, and award a certificate of completion.

**Q: How often does a coach need to be certified?**

A: Coaches need to be certified every two years or when notified that new information is available and required for certification.

**Q: Have there been other changes to the Concussion Law in recent years?**

A: Yes. The following changes have been made to the Concussion Law:

- Clarified that the law applies to all public and accredited nonpublic schools (July 1, 2016)
- Required that schools distribute information sheets to parents and student athletes in grades 5-12 which must be returned to the school before the student is allowed to practice or participate in an interscholastic sport, including cheerleading (July 1, 2016)
- Required that student athletes who participate in an interscholastic sport, including cheerleading, in grades 5-12, and who have a suspected concussion, must be removed from play and cannot return to play until 24 hours have passed and a release, signed by a health care provider who has been trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and head injuries, has been presented to the school (July 1, 2016)
- Required that head and assistant coaches of students in grades 5-12 who participate in interscholastic sports, including cheerleading, must take a concussion certification course (July 1, 2017)
- No changes have been made to the requirements for football coaches – the same certification course is required for all coaches who coach students in grades 1-12 and the team practices or plays on public property (July 1, 2014)

**Q: Where can a coach find a list of the approved courses?**

A: A list of approved courses for coaches can be found on the Indiana Department of Education website at <https://www.doe.in.gov/student-services/health/concussion-and-sudden-cardiac-arrest>.

**Q: Where can I find a copy of the current Concussion Law?**

A: The law (enacted July 1, 2012) is titled “Student Athletes: Concussions and Head Injuries”. It is listed under Indiana Code as IC 20-34-7 and can be found by clicking [here](#).

**Q: Are there sample forms that schools could use regarding the implementation of this law?**

A: Yes. Sample forms can be found on the Indiana Department of Education website by clicking this [link](#). Schools are not required to use these forms. If a school has its own forms that meet the requirements of the law, the school may continue to use its own forms.

**Q: Does this law’s requirements for educational materials and return to play apply to all students?**

A: No. This law does not apply to all students. The law only applies to students who are in grades 5-12 who participate in an interscholastic sport, including cheerleading.

**Q: What is the definition of an interscholastic sport?**

A: An interscholastic sport is defined as one that is sanctioned by the Indiana High School Athletic Association (IHSAA). These include the following for boys: baseball, basketball, cross country, football, golf, soccer, swimming, tennis, track and wrestling; and for girls: basketball, cross country, golf, gymnastics, soccer, softball, swimming, tennis, track, and volleyball.

**Q: Is cheerleading considered an interscholastic or intramural sport?**

A: Cheerleading can be classified as both an interscholastic and an intramural sport. If the cheerleading squad cheers for a team that is defined as an interscholastic sport in the answer above, then those students on that particular squad would be included under this law if they are enrolled in grades 5-12.

**Q: Are intramural sports, club sports and intramural cheerleading required to follow the requirements in IC 20-34-7?**

A: No. The law only applies to student athletes who participate in interscholastic sports. That being said, if, as part of a head coach's or assistant coach's coaching certification requirements, compliance with Indiana’s laws related to training for concussion awareness and prevention is required, then intramural coaches will need to participate in the same training required of interscholastic coaches.

**Q: If schools with intramural sports, club sports or intramural cheerleading follow all of the requirements of IC 20-34-7, are they able to claim the liability protection offered in this law?**

A: Yes. Any school who follows the requirements of IC 20-34-7 will have the same immunity protection as interscholastic sports.

**Q: What about other students who do not fall under the legal definitions of this law?**

A: For a student, of any age or sport, the recommendation would be for the adults in charge to take concussions, head injuries and heat related illnesses seriously. If a concussion or head injury is suspected for any student, the recommendation would be to remove the student from play, notify the student's parents and recommend that the student be evaluated by a licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and head injuries before allowing the student to return to practice or game play. Any student suspected of experiencing a heat related illness should be properly assessed and treated.

**Q: When can a student athlete return to play?**

A: The law mandates that a student athlete - who plays an interscholastic sport, including cheerleading, in grades 5-12, who is suspected of having a concussion - must sit out for at least 24 hours. A licensed health care provider, if available, can do an initial sideline evaluation of a student athlete and may return the athlete to practice or a game if no concussion is suspected. However, if during this initial assessment a concussion is suspected, the student athlete must be removed from play for at least 24 hours, must be evaluated by a licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and head injuries, and must receive a written clearance before returning to play or practice.

**Q: When should a student athlete be pulled from play?**

A: If a student athlete has had a bump, blow or jolt to the head or body, the student must be pulled from play and assessed for signs or symptoms of a concussion. The student may be assessed by an athletic trainer or a licensed health care provider, if available. The athletic trainer or health care provider can make a first assessment of the student athlete at the time of injury. If the student exhibits any of the danger signs associated with a concussion, the student athlete should receive immediate medical attention.

If during this initial assessment, the student athlete does not exhibit any of the danger signs associated with a concussion, but does exhibit any (even one) of the signs or symptoms of a concussion, a concussion should be suspected. At that time, the student athlete must be removed from play, the athlete's parents must be notified, and the athlete may not return to play for a minimum of 24 hours. Before returning to practice or play, the athlete must be evaluated by a licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and head injuries, and a written clearance (such as the "Concussion Evaluation and Release to Play Form for Licensed Health Care Providers") must be completed.

**Q: What training is necessary for a licensed health care provider?**

A: The law states that the student athlete release to return to play form should be signed by a "licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and head injuries". There is no definition in the law of what constitutes a "trained" provider. Thus, it will be up to the individual health care provider to determine if he/she feels qualified or if he/she would rather refer the student to a specialist. Additionally, a parent could request a specialist or a second opinion if they felt this was needed.

**Q: Does a student athlete have to lose consciousness for a concussion to be suspected?**

A: No. If a student athlete exhibits any of the signs or symptoms listed on the fact sheet, even if it is just one of the symptoms, he/she should be suspected of having a concussion.

**Q: What should be done if a student athlete does lose consciousness, even for a brief time, after a blow to the head or body?**

A: Losing consciousness is one of the danger signs when a concussion is suspected. A student athlete must receive immediate medical attention if after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body he/she exhibits any of the danger signs listed on the fact sheet.

**Q: Is neurocognitive testing required as a baseline for student athletes?**

A: No. Neurocognitive testing is not required by law. However, many health care providers, trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and head injuries, recommend that student athletes have this baseline testing at least once before participating in an organized athletic sport.

**Guidance for Football Coaches:**

**Q: What is the requirement for football coaches?**

A: All football coaches (head coaches and assistant football coaches) who coach children under the age of 20, who coach children in grades 1 through 12, and who utilize public property (parks, schools, public fields) for practice or games must take a certification course that has been approved by the Indiana Department of Education.

**Q: What does this certification course for football coaches entail?**

A: The course must:

- Be football specific
- Contain player safety content on:
  - Concussion awareness
  - Equipment fitting
  - Heat emergency preparedness
  - Proper technique
- Contain a comprehensive test
- Award a certificate of completion
- Be approved by the Indiana Department of Education

**Q: Does this law apply to all volunteer coaches?**

A: The law does not specifically address paid coaches versus volunteer coaches. However, the Indiana Department of Education Concussion Advisory Board recommends that all volunteer football coaches participate in this training as well.

**Q: Does this football certification course apply to coaches who practice and play only on private property?**

A: No. IC 20-34-7 only applies to football coaches whose teams practice or play on public property. However, if a private football team plays any of its games or practices on public fields during the season, then the football coaches would fall under this law and would need to be certified.

**Q: Where can I find a football certification course that meets the requirements of IC 20-34-7?**

A: A list of courses that have been approved by the Indiana Department of Education as meeting the requirements of this law can be found at the following website by clicking [here](#).

**Guidance for Coaches (excluding football coaches):**

**Q: What training is required for assistant and head coaches of all other sports (excluding football)?**

A: As of July 1, 2017, SEA 234 required that all assistant and head coaches of interscholastic sports for students in grades 5-12 become educated regarding the signs, symptoms and management of concussion injuries. As of December 31, 2018, HEA 1024 requires that coaches of interscholastic sports for students in grades 5-12 become educated regarding the prevention and response to heat related medical issues.

Thus, the courses must:

- Contain player safety content on:
  - Concussion awareness
  - Heat emergency preparedness
- Contain a comprehensive test
- Award a certificate of completion
- Be approved by the Indiana Department of Education

A list of the approved courses for meeting these requirements can be found on the IDOE website by clicking [here](#).