



## **Indiana Code 20-34-7: Concussion Law**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

**(Updated April 2022)**

**Q: Is there any new or updated information regarding the Concussion Law?**

A: Yes, new courses have been approved to meet the football tackling and equipment fitting requirements of the Concussion Law. Please see the information below specific to football coaches.

**Q: Do coaches, besides football coaches, have to take any courses?**

A: Yes, please see the information below regarding course requirements for coaches of other sports, including cheerleading.

**Q: Are there additional requirements for schools with regards to the Concussion Law?**

A: Yes, please see below for additional information and guidance related to this law.

### **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 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: 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.



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**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](#). Please note that there are currently three options for football coaches to take. Each option has more than one course that must be taken in order to meet the requirements of the law.

**GUIDANCE FOR COACHES (EXCLUDING FOOTBALL):**

**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.

**Q: What type of courses meet the requirements of IC 20-34-7?**

A: According to this law, coaches must take courses that:

- 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

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

A: No, this law only applies to coaches who coach an interscholastic sport in a public or state-accredited non-public school.



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**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 responsibilities, 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: 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: 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 Concussion Website](#).

**Q: Are there any other courses required for coaches besides a concussion and heat-related emergency course?**

A: Yes, as of July 1, 2021, all coaches, including football coaches, cheerleading coaches, and marching band leaders are required to take a sudden cardiac arrest certification course. Information about the sudden cardiac arrest course can be found [here](#).



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## List of Required Courses for Coaches and Band Leaders

Coach or Leader	Indiana Code	Approved Courses
Head or Assistant Coaches (including cheerleading) for all Interscholastic Sports (excluding football)	<p>IC 20-34-7-7: requires concussion awareness and heat-related medical issues training</p> <p>IC 20-34-8-9: requires sudden cardiac arrest training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Concussion Course for Youth Coaches</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Concussion Course for High School Coaches</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Heat Illness Prevention Course for Coaches</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Sudden Cardiac Arrest Course</a></li> </ul>
Head or Assistant Coaches for Football	<p>IC 20-34-7-6: requires concussion awareness, equipment fitting, heat emergency preparedness, and proper tackling technique training</p> <p>IC 20-34-8-9: requires sudden cardiac arrest training</p>	<p>Football coaches must complete all of the courses under one of the options below as well as the Sudden Cardiac Arrest Course.</p> <p>OPTION ONE: NFHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Concussion in Sports</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Heat Illness Prevention</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Football Tackling</a></li> </ul> <p>OPTION TWO: USA Football</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Health and Safety</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Advanced Contact Certification</a></li> </ul> <p>OPTION THREE: NFHS and Atavus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Concussion in Sports</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Heat Illness Prevention</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Atavus Tackling Certification</a></li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Sudden Cardiac Arrest Course</a></li> </ul>
Band Leaders	<p>IC 20-34-8-9: requires sudden cardiac arrest training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Sudden Cardiac Arrest Course</a></li> </ul>



## **GENERAL GUIDANCE**

**Q: As a review, could you please give a history regarding the changes and the requirements mandated by this law?**

A: Yes, there have been multiple changes to this law over the past 10 years. These changes include:

### **2012**

- Required that high school students and their parents be given information sheets regarding the risks of concussions and that each sign an acknowledgement form
- Required that high school student athletes with a suspected concussion be removed from play and could not return to play until he/she received written clearance from a healthcare provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussions

### **2013**

- No changes

### **2014**

- Added a requirement that football coaches take a certification course regarding concussions, heat exhaustion, proper technique, and equipment fitting
- Required that high school student athletes with a suspected concussion be removed from play and were not allowed to return to play until at least 24 hours had passed

### **2015**

- Clarified that the football certification course applied to coaches of student athletes under the age of 20, but only those students who were in grades 1-12

### **2016**

- Expanded the law to include, not only high school students, but also students in grades 5-8 regarding the information sheets and the return to play protocols
- Clarified that the law was mandatory for interscholastic sports and cheerleading, but although recommended, was optional for other sports such as club and intramural sports
- Requires coaches of all other interscholastic sports (excluding football) to take a concussion certification course beginning June 30, 2017

### **2017**

- Expanded the law to include additional educational requirements for coaches
- Requires all assistant coaches and head coaches of students in grades 5-12, who participate in interscholastic sports, including cheerleading, to take a “preventions and response to heat related medical issues” certification course beginning December 1, 2018

**Q: Where can I find more information about this law?**

A: For the most up-to-date information regarding this law, please refer to the [IDOE Concussion Website](#) which contains a link to the law, guidance materials, sample forms, and a chart with links to the approved courses for concussion, heat-related emergencies, and sudden cardiac arrest.



**Q: Are schools required to use the sample forms provided by the IDOE?**

A: No, schools are not required to use these forms. If a school has their own forms that meet the requirements of the law, they may continue to use their own forms.

**Q: Does this law, in regards to the educational materials and the return to play requirements, apply to all students?**

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

**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 healthcare 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 healthcare 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 healthcare 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 should be removed from play, the athlete's parents should be notified, and the athlete should not return to play for a minimum of 24 hours. Before returning to practice or play, the athlete must be evaluated by a licensed healthcare provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and head injuries, and a written clearance (such as the "Concussion Evaluation and



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Release to Play Form for Licensed Health Care Providers”) must be completed. Additional guidance from the IHSAA and the Release to Play Form for Providers can be found on this [webpage](#).

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

A: The law states that the student athlete release to return to play form should be signed by a "licensed healthcare 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 healthcare 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 should 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 healthcare 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. More information regarding baseline testing can be found [here](#).

**Q: Is there additional guidance regarding concussions?**

A: Yes, the CDC has a concussion website specifically for schools. This [site](#) includes videos, fact sheets, podcasts, graphics, and numerous resources for school staff, parents, and students.