



LAKES AREA HOCKEY ASSOCIATION

Concussion Management & Return to Play Policy 2025-2026 Season

The following provisions apply to participation in hockey programming with Lakes Area Hockey Association ("LAHA"), which includes the Boji Mammoths.

Statement of Purpose

The Lakes Area Hockey Association (LAHA) is committed to prioritizing the **safety, health, and well-being** of all players. While injuries are an unfortunate aspect of sports, LAHA is dedicated to implementing **consistent and responsible procedures** for injury reporting and managing a player's return to hockey activities. This policy applies to all **players, team staff, and parents/guardians** involved with LAHA.

Scope

This policy applies to all **participants aged 3–18** engaged in any **on-ice** or **off-ice** hockey activity under the supervision of LAHA.

Definition of Concussion

A **concussion** is a **traumatic brain injury** caused by a blow to the head or body that results in **rapid movement of the brain within the skull**.

Concussion Management Guidelines

LAHA follows **nationally recognized best practices** to **recognize, remove, and refer** players suspected of having sustained a head injury.

1. Recognize

Players displaying any of the following **signs** must be **removed from play**:

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets sports plays
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows changes in behavior or personality
- Cannot recall events before or after the incident

Players **reporting** any of the following **symptoms** must be **removed from play**:

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance issues or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Feeling sluggish, foggy, or groggy
- Difficulty with concentration or memory
- Confusion
- Reports "not feeling right"

2. Remove

Per **Iowa Code Section 280.13C**, if a coach observes any **signs, symptoms, or behaviors** consistent with a concussion, the player must be **immediately removed** from participation.

3. Refer

- The player must be evaluated by a **licensed healthcare provider** trained in **concussion management**.
- No player may return to activity **on the same day** without **formal evaluation** and **written medical clearance**.

Injury Reporting Procedures – Head Injuries / Suspected Concussions

- The **coach and/or team manager** must notify the player's **parent/guardian** and the **LAHA Hockey Director** of the suspected concussion.

Recordkeeping & Documentation

- All **suspected head injuries or concussions** must be recorded in the **LAHA Injury Log**.
- The incident must also be documented using the **MWAHA Concussion Reporting Form**.
- **USA Hockey Return to Play Forms** must be kept on file and provided to the **LAHA Board** upon request.

Concussion Return-to-Play Protocol

Once a player has been **diagnosed with a concussion**, they must follow a **stepwise return-to-play progression**. Advancement to the next stage is only permitted if the player remains **symptom-free for at least 24 hours**.

Return-to-Play Steps:

1. **Rest and Recovery** – No physical activity; focus on full recovery
2. **Light Aerobic Exercise** – Stationary bike, walking (no resistance training)
3. **Sport-Specific Drills** – Skating and other hockey-specific non-contact activities
4. **Non-Contact Training Drills** – Full gear; no body contact or scrimmages
5. **Full Contact Practice** – Allowed only after **written medical clearance**
6. **Return to Game Play**

*If symptoms reoccur at any stage, the player must return to the previous **symptom-free step**.*

Return to Play Authorization

- A player removed for suspected concussion may not return until evaluated by a **licensed healthcare provider** and **cleared in writing**.
- Acceptable providers (per **Iowa Code Section 280.13C**) include:
 - Physicians
 - Physician Assistants
 - Chiropractors
 - Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioners
 - Nurses
 - Physical Therapists
 - Licensed Athletic Trainers
- A **signed USA Hockey Return to Play Form** must be submitted by the **parent/guardian** to the **LAHA Hockey Director**.
- Only upon **verification** will the Hockey Director notify the coaching staff of the player's **eligibility to return**.

Non-Compliance & Safety Authority

- **No player may participate** without the **required medical clearance**.
- In cases of disagreement or uncertainty, **player safety takes precedence**. Final decisions rest with the **LAHA Hockey Director** or **LAHA Board President**.
- **Violations** of this policy may result in **disciplinary action**.