



# What's ahead for concussion policy in New Jersey?

By [DAVID BIGGY](#) • STAFF WRITER • January 15, 2011

As a condition of license renewal under the new state law that requires K-12 school districts to have a concussions policy in place by next school year, all athletic trainers in New Jersey must "complete 24 hours of continuing education credits, which includes specific instruction on concussions and head injuries."

And while Colts Neck High School athletic trainer Eric Nussbaum and others each expressed that such conditions weren't necessary, they will reap the benefits.

"Most of us as athletic trainers have always kept up to date on concussions, because we've always needed to be," he said. "I don't necessarily have a problem with that part of the law, because it will mean that New Jersey's athletic trainers will be the only health care professionals in the state who have mandated concussion education. And if concussions are going to happen in schools, why not have the most qualified people in place to determine what to do next?"

However, there is some level of concern regarding younger athletes, particularly in middle schools and recreation sports. While the new law includes athletics in K-12 school districts, many middle schools don't have athletic trainers on site during athletic competitions.

In addition, the law does not require athletic trainers to be present at youth competitions, many of which are played at district schools throughout the state.

"In a high school with an athletic trainer, they're usually doing a very good job with head injuries because that's how we're trained," said Suzanna Barba, West Morris Central High School's athletic trainer. "I wish this law could do more with the middle school and youth sports. Not having athletic trainers at middle school and youth sports worries me more than anything else."

Diegnen said the intention of the law is to protect middle schoolers and any other youth programs within K-12 school districts and recommends policymakers even include youngsters who sustain head injuries in gym class.

But he said the law does not include youth sports operated by town recreation departments.

"We did what we could do," Diegnan said. "Obviously, we'd love to see every sports entity to adopt a concussion policy of some kind. If we had the opportunity to go farther with this legislation, we would have done it. But it wasn't feasible to include youth sports within the context of this law."

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