Ohio students pay the price when high schools do not have concussion policies

Student journalists from Kent State University contacted 26 high schools throughout Ohio and we found that only 14 schools can track athletic concussions. Seventeen high schools said they have a concussion policy, but only seven schools sent us the policies we requested.

In Youngstown City School District, Ed Matey, the Athletic Director of East High School said, “we have not had a concussion injury for nine years in this school district.”

Paul Miller the Athletic Trainer at Gahanna Lincoln High School said, “we have had seven reported incidents of concussions thus far this year in football and tennis and volleyball.”

Miller was asked to send electronic copies of the reported incidents and said that he feels like he is on 60 Minutes and that they do not keep electronic records just good old-fashioned pen and paper.

The Center for Disease Control (HYPERLINK http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/sports/prevention.html) said recognition and proper response to concussions can prevent injury and death and most concussions occur without the loss of consciousness.

The CDC said, “A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury or TBI, caused by a bump, blow or jolt to the head that can change the way your brain normally works.”

Are students safe on and off the field? (Subhead)

The public records request we sent asked for this simple information:
1.) Information on the athletic department or school's concussion policy for athletes.
2.) Every record for the current academic year describing required concussion training for coaches.
3.) Every record for the last and current academic year with the students name redacted documenting a concussion or suspected concussion of an athlete.

David Allenick, the Supervisor of Athletics for the Parma City School District said he does not know if Normandy High School tracks concussions or if there is a specific form they must fill out if a student suffers a concussion.

When Allenick was asked for the public record documents he said, “Again I’m not sure if we have records like that. Let me put it like this I’m not aware of any records kept like that.”
According to the Ohio High School Athletic Association (HYPERLINK to http://www.ohsaa.org/medicine/Concussions/ConcussionRegulations.pdf) someone who suffers a concussion can experience a range of symptoms including, but not always a headache, nausea, balance problems or dizziness and sensitivity to light and noise.

Out of 17 high schools that said they have a concussion policy Chillicothe High School was one of the seven schools that complied with our public records request.

Chillicothe High School (HYPERLINK to the Chillicothe's Concussion Report) sent us a detailed report of their athletic policy and records of students who have received concussions dating as far back as 2009.

The reports from Chillicothe detailed the three levels of concussion severity and what to look for. Parents are notified immediately if their son or daughter have suffered a suspected concussion in the Chillicothe school system.

On the Chillicothe concussion report sheet it said an athlete fell and hit her head on the soccer field, felt tenderness in her neck and a mild headache. She did not develop any other symptoms, but was not allowed to drive home.

Another student from Chillicothe reported at 10:45a.m. symptoms of headache, dizziness, nausea, light sensitivity, drowsiness and restlessness. During immediate recall the student scored a 3/5 words, 1/5 concentration, 2/5 delayed recall and 3/5 orientation. At 11:05 EMS was notified because the student complained of midline neck pain. After the incident the student was out from school for a week and a month later quit the team.

Jill Moberley the Public Information Officer at Meadowdale High School in Dayton said they do not have a school policy, but they follow Ohio High School Athletic Association concussion guidelines.

The schools that do not have a concussion policy said they follow OHSAA guidelines. The policy from OHSAA (HYPERLINK REPORT FORM http://www.ohsaa.org/medicine/OHSAAConcussionReport.pdf) tracks concussions during games, but not during practices. So what happens when a student suffers a concussion during practice?

Superintendent Terry Martin from Zanesville High School said the trainers are certified to handle concussions and they always have three athletic trainers and a team physician on staff at all times.

“We haven’t had any specific advisory on concussions, but I think that’s simply because we take it very seriously already,” Martin said.

Brunswick High School only follows OHSAA guidelines, but they have a contract with the Cleveland Clinic to diagnose and treat concussions.
The Athletic Director Pierto Demonte said Brunswick School District contracts two certified trainers and has a doctor on site for games. Suspected concussions for games and practice are referred to either an on-site certified trainer or a medical facility.

“We go to extremes here...these are kids,” Demonte said.