



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Sports Concussion Legislation Signed by Governor Nixon**

On July 13, 2011 Governor Jay Nixon signed the “Interscholastic Youth Sports Brain Injury Prevention Act” House Bill 300/334/387. This legislation will help protect young athletes from possible long-term effects of a concussion, which is a mild traumatic brain injury.

Dr. Tom Martin, Psy.D., ABPP, immediate past president of the Brain Injury Association of Missouri and the Director of Adult Neuropsychology at the University of Missouri – Columbia states “The brain controls every aspect of our being, including sensory and motor functioning, cognitive abilities, breathing and heart rate, and personality. A brain injury can result in changes in any area of function.”

A concussion is a brain injury that can result from a blow or jolt to the head or body, causing the brain to move rapidly back and forth, or side to side within the skull.

An estimated 140,000 student-athletes sustain a concussion each year in the United States. However, it is believed this number is underestimated since many concussions are unrecognized or unreported. Athletes who return to play or practice before fully recovering from a concussion are at higher risk of sustaining another concussion with more severe symptoms.

The symptoms of a concussion can include a persistent headache, nausea, blurry vision, sensitivity to light, decreased coordination, lack of concentration, changes in sleep pattern, balance problems and seizure. These symptoms do not always immediately follow the injury. It may take hours, days or even weeks for the symptoms of a concussion to be experienced or witnessed.

Recognizing and responding when a concussion may first occur helps in the recovery and may prevent long-term effects of the brain injury.

Missouri joins 27 other states that have sports-related concussion legislation. The “Interscholastic Youth Sports Brain Injury Prevention Act” reduces the risk of an athlete returning to play before fully healing from a sports-related concussion.

Key components of the “Interscholastic Youth Sports Brain Injury Prevention Act” are:

- 1) Coaches, parents and athletes receive education and information annually regarding concussions.
- 2) An athlete who appears to have sustained a concussion is immediately removed from play or practice. They are not allowed to return for a minimum of 24 hours.
- 3) A licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussions must provide clearance for the athlete to return to play or practice.

Harvey Richards, Missouri State High School Activities Association (MSHSAA) associate executive director states “Protecting young athletes, who are students first, is important and we applaud Missouri lawmakers in passage of this important legislation.”

Education for coaches, parents, athletes and game officials regarding sport-related concussions is an important component of protecting young athletes from the possible long-term effects.

The Brain Injury Association of Missouri (BIA-MO) executive director, Maureen Cunningham, recommends “In addition to coaches, it is important for parents and athletes to be aware of the symptoms of a possible concussion since the signs may not be noticeable for several hours or even days following an impact.”

For more information regarding education available for coaches, parents, athletes or school personnel contact the Brain Injury Association of Missouri at [www.biamo.org](http://www.biamo.org) or 800-444-6443. Online training is available at [www.mshsaa.org](http://www.mshsaa.org).

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**The Brain Injury Association of Missouri is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization. Our mission is to prevent brain injuries, to promote acceptance, independence and productivity of persons with brain injury and to support their families and professionals who serve them as well as the community.**