

CHAPTER 54  
CONCUSSION OR OTHER BRAIN INJURY RETURN-TO-PLAY PROTOCOL

Chapter rescission date pursuant to Iowa Code section 17A.7: 12/1/30

**641—54.1(280) Definitions.** For the purpose of these rules, the following definitions apply:

*“Asymptomatic”* means the student is no longer showing signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion or other brain injury.

*“Contest”* means the same as defined in Iowa Code section 280.13C(2).

*“Extracurricular interscholastic activity”* means the same as defined in Iowa Code section 280.13C(2).

*“Licensed health care provider”* means the same as defined in Iowa Code section 280.13C(2).

*“Medical clearance”* means written clearance from a licensed health care provider releasing the student following a concussion or other brain injury to return to or commence participation in any extracurricular interscholastic activity.

*“Rest”* means a recovery state at which physical and cognitive activities are reduced or removed with the intent to eliminate the signs, symptoms, or behaviors of brain injury.

*“Return-to-learn plan”* means the plan developed by personnel of a school district or accredited nonpublic school based on guidance developed as required under Iowa Code section 280.13C(6) “b” to provide adjustments or accommodations as the student returns to the classroom.

*“Return-to-play”* means the gradual, step-wise approach to returning a student to participation in any extracurricular interscholastic activity following a concussion or other brain injury.

[ARC 9618C, IAB 10/15/25, effective 12/1/25]

**641—54.2(280) Return-to-play protocol.** The return-to-play protocol will be developed by the Iowa high school athletic association and Iowa girls high school athletic union and be disseminated to Iowa public schools and accredited nonpublic schools. The protocol will be based on current evidence-based practice and will include the following process:

**54.2(1) Return-to-play process.**

*a.* No student will return to contest or practice the same day as a suspected concussion or other brain injury.

*b.* A student suspected of having a concussion will be evaluated by a licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussion and other brain injuries as soon as feasible.

*c.* A student who has been removed from participation will receive written medical clearance prior to starting the return-to-play protocol.

*d.* The return-to-play steps shall be conducted under the guidance of a licensed health care provider following current best practice and as set forth by the Iowa high school athletic association and Iowa girls high school athletic union, with provision for delayed return-to-play steps as necessary.

*e.* Return-to-play may begin when the student is still symptomatic, after a brief period of rest.

*f.* No contact- or collision-related activities will be performed as part of the return-to-play steps until the student has written medical clearance from a licensed health care provider and has returned to pre-injury academic function.

**54.2(2) Reserved.**

[ARC 9618C, IAB 10/15/25, effective 12/1/25]

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code section 280.13C.

[Filed ARC 4193C (Notice ARC 4034C, IAB 9/26/18), IAB 12/19/18, effective 1/23/19]

[Filed ARC 9618C (Notice ARC 9490C, IAB 8/20/25), IAB 10/15/25, effective 12/1/25]