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**Blue Valley School District**

Interoffice Memorandum

**TO: Dr. Mike Slagle**

**FROM: Lane Green**

**RE: Requested Football Information: Helmet Safety**

**DATE: Thursday, August 14, 2014**

**CC: Dr. Tony Lake**

This comes with regards to your request for information regarding the use of football helmets in the Blue Valley School District. It is important to understand that when the request makes reference to “Policies;” only our Board of Education can adopt policies for the school district (#1520). These policies define the mission for the district, establish the direction for academic standards in the district, and determine long and short term goals that will contribute to the continuous improvement and move the district towards its mission. The Board of Education relies on the expertise of its staff members to determine the actual guidelines and procedures for the operations of the district; as in the case of concussion management.

Our guidelines and protocols in the area of concussion management have been developed over time as a result of collaboration with and/or information drawn from many partners; the KSHSAA, the NFHS, the local medical community, the Center for Disease Control, USA Football, and Kansas State Law.

Please make note of the following:

**The make and model of football helmets owned and used by the Blue Valley Unified School District.**

**High School**

The Blue Valley School District purchases the Revolution Speed Adult Helmet at the high school level. This is the only model of football helmet that we have purchased over the past few years. This NOCSAE approved helmet also has the Virginia Tech Adult Football Helmet Rating of 5-stars (Best Available). This helmet is also rated for and used by many collegiate football programs.

**Middle School**

The Blue Valley School District purchases the Revolution Speed Classic Youth Football Helmet. This is also a NOCSAE approved helmet. Up to this time, Virginia Tech has not tested youth helmets. However, they will be adding youth helmets for the first time in 2015.

Virginia Tech Helmet Ratings will also begin to test rotational acceleration as well as linear acceleration in 2015.

**The Blue Valley School District’s Policy and/or Procedure Regarding How Often It Replaces the Football Helmets Owned and Used.**

The Blue Valley Schools takes any helmet out of its inventory immediately if it is deemed unsafe for use. However, many of the components of a helmet can be replaced if found defective during the reconditioning or ongoing inspection process. Additionally, per NAERA guidelines (National Athletic Equipment Reconditioning Association), the district rotates all football helmets out of its inventory when they reach 10 years from the manufacture date; even if the helmet was not used all ten years.

**The name of the company hired to recondition the football helmets owned and used by the Blue Valley School District**

We utilize the actual manufacturer; Riddell, to recondition the helmets.

Note: We stress that the helmet safety is an ongoing process. Schools should not rely on the reconditioning of helmets alone. There is the false belief that reconditioning of helmets is the only safety precaution that we take with regards to helmet safety. It is a safety issue no doubt but it is also a warranty issue. Most important is the regular inspection of helmets which is of tremendous importance to our school district. While inspecting helmets, coaches look for the following:

* **Shell** - Cracks, particularly noting any cracks around holes (where most cracks start) and replace any shells that have cracked.
* **Hardware** - Mounting rivets, screws, hook/loop tape, and snaps for breakage, distortion, and/or looseness.
* **Faceguards** – Exposed bare metal or if guard has spread (flattened out) or sprung (opened up).
* **Internal** **components** - Jaw Pads, Chin Straps, Front Sizers, Back Sizers, Crown pad and side pads.

**The name of the person or company responsible for fitting the helmets used by the football players in the Blue Valley School District.**

Our football coaches fit the football helmets on the players. They are trained by a representative from Riddell on the proper procedures. Additionally, Riddell provides valuable information on what to look for when inspecting the helmets (see answer above).

**The Blue Valley School District’s Policy on the Prevention and Treatment of Concussions**

Based on the Kansas Head Injury Prevention Act (2011), any student participating in athletics or spirit groups must have on file with the school a Concussion and Head Injury Information Release Form signed by both a parent/guardian and the students. The form must be on file before the student participates in their first practice of the school year.

The form can be found at the following link: <http://www.bluevalleyk12.org/education/components/docmgr/default.php?sectiondetailid=1741&fileitem=207772&catfilter=ALL>

All schools, athletic directors and coaches of high-risk sports are required to include concussion awareness as part of their pre-season parent meetings, etc.

Additionally, per Kansas State Law, if a student is removed from competition due to a suspected concussion they are not to be returned to play the same day. If removed, the student needs written clearance from a Health Care Provider (MD or DO) before they can begin return to play protocols.

It is important to note that the Blue Valley Schools had already implemented all of the above procedures prior to the Kansas Head Injury Prevention Act.

Additionally, coaches are asked to take the NFHS Course “Concussion in Sports.” In cooperation with the CDC, this course educates coaches on the importance of proper concussion recognition and management in interscholastic sports. The course highlights the impact of sports-related concussion on athletes, teaches how to recognize a suspected concussion, and provides protocols to manage a suspected concussion with steps to help players return to play safely after a concussion.

The Blue Valley School District has also partnered with the University of Kansas Center for Sports Medicine to provide each high school with full-time athletic trainers. The athletic trainers provide front-line support in the area of concussion management. The athletic trainers are also available to our Middle School athletes.

Working with the University of Kansas Center for Sports Medicine, we provide our student-athletes ImPACT baseline and post-injury testing. These tests are not required on the part of student-athletes. However, families are strongly encouraged to take advantage of this service.

In the event of a suspected concussion, families can utilize the CIC (Credentialed ImPACT Consultants) at the University of Kansas. The Center for Sports Medicine and the school district also provides training to school nurses, coaches, teachers and parents in the area of concussion management. In fact, the University of Kansas Center for Sports Medicine provided an hour-long training for our coaches at an in-service held on August 7, 2014.

**The Blue Valley School District’s Policy on head-to-head blocking or tackling in football.**

The building athletic directors ensure that every football coach in the Blue Valley School District teaches their student athletes the proper techniques for tackling on the first day that the football players can wear full pads. These techniques are then reinforced the entire season. Coaches have also participated in USA Football’s Heads Up program that instructs our coaches on utilizing the “Heads Up” techniques in tackling instruction.

In addition, coaches teach our athletes with regards to the proper use of football helmets. For example, not to sit on helmets because this practice can change the shape; thus the fit, of these protective devices.