



# Ohio Board of Psychology

Ohio Youth Sports Concussion and Head Injury Return to Play Guidelines Committee  
Testimony on behalf of the Ohio Board of Psychology  
Ronald Ross, Ph.D., Executive Director  
December 18, 2014

Director Hodges and Members of the Committee:

I am Ronald Ross, Executive Director of the Ohio Board of Psychology. Thank you all and a special thanks to Robert Jennings for inviting me to offer the perspective of the Psychology Board relative to the Committee's charge, as I understand it, to develop guidelines relative to: (1) diagnosis and treatment of concussions; (2) the conditions under which an athlete may be granted clearance to return to practice or competition; and (3) the minimum education requirements necessary to qualify a physician or licensed health care professional to assess and clear an athlete for return to practice or competition.

As you are aware, psychologists who practice neuropsychology are uniquely trained in the applied science of brain-behavior relationships, and have long been at the forefront of developing concussion management standards for professional and youth sports. Neuropsychologists are specially trained in the clinical assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of brain injuries, including concussions. Ohio is fortunate to have many highly skilled neuropsychologists in various healthcare settings across Ohio.

## Competence and Scope of Practice in Psychology

The practice of neuropsychology is squarely within the scope of practice of psychology in Ohio, across the United States, and internationally. This scope of practice includes the neuropsychological evaluation of individuals with confirmed or suspected brain injuries like concussions, determination of cognitive and behavioral disturbances, treatment planning, and engaging in post-concussion return-to-play and return-to-learn clearances. The administration and interpretation of sophisticated neuropsychological tests of cognition, for example, are among the specialized skills within the domain of neuropsychology. The Psychology Board issues a "general" license, which places ethical and regulatory responsibilities on psychologists by mandating self-limitation of one's practices to those areas in which competency has been established by virtue of education, training, and experience. This is not unique across the health professions. Neither every neuropsychologist, nor every neurologist, possesses the specialized skills required to identify and manage brain injuries. It is important to understand that a small percentage of Ohio's 3,500 psychologists self-identify as being competent in "neuropsychology." Another subset includes Ohio's neuropsychologists who are educated, trained, and experienced in the area of identifying and managing brain injuries, and who are obligated to comport their

practice in line with current, prevailing standards of care. In other words, they must be and remain competent.

Suggested Guideline Language: Minimum Education, Training, and Ongoing Education

The Psychology Board encourages the Committee to include neuropsychologists as licensed professionals with specialization in teasing out brain-behavior correlates of brain injuries, including concussion evaluation and management. Language identifying neuropsychologists should not be too restrictive or too broad. Relative to the Committee's charge, we agree that language similar to the Pennsylvania concussion law captures the Board's desire to see language that is both consistent with the scope of practice of neuropsychologists in Ohio, and is appropriately broad to avoid any inadvertent disqualification of those with specialized neuropsychological expertise:

*"A psychologist licensed by the state board of psychology under chapter 4732 of the Revised Code who is neuropsychologically trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and/or who has completed postdoctoral training in neuropsychology specific to the neuropsychological evaluation and management of concussions."*

The Psychology Board also believes that, part and parcel of public protection and fostering current, competent practice, the Committee should consider including a requirement for the completion of a minimum of 4-6 hours of annual continuing education in the area of youth concussion management for all providers qualified by the Committee to render services under ORC 3707.521. Finally, please know that the Psychology Board is prepared to write rules to implement any decisions made by the Committee specific to the role of Ohio's neuropsychologists in youth sports concussion management.

The Ohio Board of Psychology sincerely appreciates this opportunity to participate in the development of guidelines aimed at protecting Ohio's youth sports participants. Thank you for your time and I would be pleased to answer any questions and get any additional information to assist you in your work.