

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY — CHAPTER

An Act to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 22.1-271.9, relating to public schools; interscholastic sports and athletics; guidelines and policies on student-athlete extreme heat safety and protection; development and implementation.

[H 1663]

Approved

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 22.1-271.9 as follows:

§ 22.1-271.9. Guidelines and policies on student-athlete extreme heat safety and protection policies.

A. The Board shall develop, biennially review and update as necessary, and distribute to each local school division guidelines on policies relating to extreme heat safety and protection for student-athletes that inform coaches, student-athletes, and student-athletes' parents of risks associated with and best-practices and strategies for ensuring the safety and protection of student-athletes when engaging in outdoor physical activity in times of extreme heat.

B. Each school board shall develop and update, in accordance with the guidelines developed by the Board pursuant to subsection A, policies on student-athlete extreme heat safety and protection. Such policies shall:

1. Be consistent with any heat guidelines based on Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) levels developed by an organization or entity whose purpose it is to regulate or govern interscholastic athletics programs in the Commonwealth;

2. Include parameters relating to the scheduling of outdoor athletics practices or games during different WBGT levels and establishing the WBGT levels at which outdoor athletics practices or games shall be cancelled;

3. Establish a heat-acclimatization and modification procedure for outdoor athletics practices or games consisting of at least five tiers of procedures for outdoor athletics practices or games based on heat or humidity levels, with the first tier outlining heat-acclimatization and modification procedures for the lowest heat or humidity level requiring special student-athlete safety and protection precautions and the final tier outlining heat-acclimatization and modification procedures for the most severe heat or humidity level before the level at which all outdoor athletics practices or games shall be cancelled pursuant to subdivision 2. Such tiered heat-acclimatization and modification procedures shall include required equipment modification, if applicable for the sport, modification of work-to-rest ratios, modification of water break requirements, and procedures relating to the use of shaded areas for rest breaks;

4. Require (i) each student-athlete to be given unhindered access at all times to hydration and a cooling space, which may be a shaded or air-conditioned area, and (ii) each student-athlete and each coach to be provided ice at any time there is a WBGT level of 80 degrees Fahrenheit or higher;

5. Include procedures relating to preventing, recognizing, and addressing heat-related illnesses, including dehydration, heat syncope, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke; and

6. Establish a process for reporting and investigating any instance in which a student-athlete experiences a severe heat-related illness requiring emergency medical treatment or resulting in death.

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