

Los Angeles Unified School District
Student Health and Human Services
Student Medical Services

CLEARANCE POLICY FOR STUDENT –ATHLETES WITH IMPAIRED VISION

Background

All sports-related activities including practice and actual competition carry a small risk of inadvertent eye injury. The consequences of any eye injury are greatly magnified in student-athletes with reduced vision in one or both eyes, regardless of the cause. In these children, an injury to the better eye can create a permanent visual disability.

Purpose

To prevent/reduce potential for permanent visual disability due to injury in student athletes with impaired vision.

Policy

The American Academy of Ophthalmology defines “functionally one-eyed athletes” as those with a best-corrected visual acuity less than 20/40 in the worse eye. As part of the routine school/sports physical, all student-athletes should be screened with a distance Snellen (or equivalent) visual acuity for each eye. If the best-corrected distance vision, wearing prescribed eyeglasses or contact lenses as needed, is worse than 20/40 in either eye, the child **MUST** use safety eyewear while participating in any sports-related activity. The safety eyewear can be in the form of eyeglasses, goggles, or a face shield that covers the eyes, but in all cases should be manufactured with polycarbonate safety glass (many prescription eyeglasses are not made of polycarbonate glass and do not provide adequate protection against eye injury).

The need for safety eyewear constructed with polycarbonate material should be clearly documented on the sports clearance/Preparticipation Physical Evaluation (PPE) physical form. In addition, the student-athlete and the parent/legal guardian should be informed of the risk of eye injury and the need for protective eyewear during participation in sports-related activities. Finally, the fact that the student-athlete and legal guardian were informed of the need for safety eyewear while participating in sports-related activities should also be recorded on the sports clearance/PPE form.