NEPSAC Executive Board Hockey Equipment Reminders for the 2026-2027 Season

NEPSAC Hockey Rules Reminders:

1. NEPSAC requires all NEPSAC hockey players to wear a properly fitting hockey-approved neck guard.
2. NEPSAC requires all NEPSAC hockey players to wear a properly fitting internal mouthguard during practices and games.
3. NEPSAC requires all NEPSAC hockey players to have helmet earpieces properly secured in their helmets.
4. NEPSAC requires all NEPSAC hockey players to have J-clips properly secured in their helmets.
5. NEPSAC requires all NEPSAC hockey players to be properly fit and equipped at all times during practices and games.

History:

Prior to the 2017-18 season, NCAA Hockey rules dictated that all players must use mouthguards during participation. The NCAA modified the rule (Proposal #4: Rule 9.5, pg. 20) from "required" to wear an internal mouthguard to "recommended" to wear an internal Mouthguard.

Mouthguards provide protection from direct and indirect impacts resulting in orofacial injuries. A properly fit, unaltered mouthguards do not affect communication or breathing. Current research does not support the theory that states mouthguards reduce or prevent concussions. (NFHS SMAC position statement, 2014).

Similarly, hockey helmet earpieces and j-clips are intended to protect against ear, skull, mouth, and chin injuries. No helmet can guarantee protection against serious injury; however, a properly fitted, properly worn, unaltered helmet can help reduce the risk or severity of injury. Altering helmets may void the manufacturer's warranty. For this reason, NEPSAC SMAC requires all hockey helmets and components (e.g., earpieces, j-clips) to remain in an unaltered state and to be in good repair.

During the 2021-2022 season, a player playing on a NEPSAC team passed away due to a laceration of his neck from a hockey skate in an accident during normal gameplay. During the 2022-2023 and 2023-2034 hockey seasons, neckguards were not required but were strongly recommended to give players and coaches time to adjust and plan for the future. With this, it was also approved that NEPSAC would move to require all NEPSAC hockey players to wear Neckguards during the 2024-2025 season for all games and practices.