

Hiring an Athletic Trainer

Student health and safety is a major concern for athletes, parents, coaches and administrators. Due to increased student participation and subsequent injury, there is a growing desire to improve health care in schools. The health and safety of student-athletes can be impaired by a lack of qualified, full-time, on-site health care professionals.

The AT is the most qualified professional to provide daily care for student athletes. Their education and clinical training equips them to provide a multitude of services. They are also the most capable person to organize and direct an athletic health care system for a secondary school. Relying on coaches, administrators, and volunteers to provide these types of services puts the athlete, school and its employees at risk.

By considering the financial sustainability, climate for support and individual school needs, you can identify which AT employment model is best for your school.

Is the health care of student athletes important to your school?

Financial Justification

While start-up costs to employ an AT can be substantial due to the initial cost of building, equipping, and supplying an athletic training room, the AT can substantially reduce the cost of health care to student athletes and risk for the school.

In the long run, costs can be reduced by providing athletic health care services free-of-charge on campus that previously were provided off-site for a fee. Schools that employ ATs have been able to show cost savings of as much as \$80,000 a year¹ to student-athletes and their families.

Providing athletic training services on campus can tremendously reduce lost instructional time for the student athlete and lost work time for parents. Decreased absenteeism can assist with the retention of state funding for public schools.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Does your target facility have a strong financial support system?
- Is there an outside source for funding activities, salaries and stipends?
- Has your school system been able to avoid terminating teachers or workers for lack of funding?
- Do coaches and activity sponsors feel adequately paid for extra duty services?
- Is your school system's financial outlook positive/adequate/favorable for the next two years?
- Where will you get your athletic funding? (Budgeted funds, booster funds, activity fees, combination of the preceding, etc.)

Employment Models

All student athletes deserve quality athletic health care provided by credentialed professionals dedicated solely to this practice. Historically, secondary school ATs have been hired as teachers with additional stipends provided for minimal athletic training duties for some sports. There are many advantages for choosing the full-time AT model as opposed to other models. Below is an overview of traditional employment models for ATs.

Full Time AT

The full time athletic trainer's sole responsibility should be the health care of the student athlete. In order to provide consistent and expert injury care on a daily basis, the AT must be focused on the athletic training program. The elimination of other responsibilities allows for a more consistent standard level of care. Full-time ATs offer the additional benefit of being available during the school day to assist the injured athlete with recovery by implementing the instructions from the team or personal physician for treatment of that injury.

Dual Position - AT/Educator

Innovative school administrators recognize the benefit to students who participate in vocational programs in the high school setting. Vocational programs are funded at a slightly higher rate compared to regular education programs in some states. Subsequently, many schools have created Vocational Education/AT positions because of the added benefit in funding and the desire to provide health care coverage for their student athletes. Possible teaching assignments for the AT include basic education in any academic area (may require teaching credentials or endorsement), vocational education (these opportunities vary state to state), or community education.

Split Position AT

School districts that may not have the resources immediately available to fund a full time AT for the health care of their student athletes may use the split-position option to begin providing the services of an AT in a particular school. It is recommended that when hiring a split-duty certified AT, the goal should be to eventually phase the split-duty position into full-time positions at each site.

Part time AT

The part time position has been found useful in situations where the school system deems athletic health care vital, but cannot create or fill a split time position, nor can it create or justify a full-time or AT/Educator position. Once a part-time position has been created, it may be easier to add a full-time or AT/Educator position as need dictates.

Enhancing Care

If you are interested in hiring an athletic trainer or if you would like to expand the medical coverage that is currently offered at your school, please access these valuable resources available at NATA.org:

- Job Descriptions
- Salary Surveys
- NATA Career Center

References

1. NATA Position Proposal Guide. Secondary School Athletic Trainers Committee, 2013.

