

**Position  
Improvement  
Guide**  
for  
Secondary School  
Athletic Trainers

## *Position Improvement Guide*

# Contributors

A special thank you to the current and former members of the Secondary School Athletic Trainers' Committee whose hard work made this document possible.

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# *Introductory* **Letter**

Dear ATC:

The NATA Secondary School Athletic Trainers' Committee provides this document to assist ATCs interested in improving their current employment situations. While we have not addressed every possible scenario in this document, we have attempted to provide a general overview of common situations that have been identified as problems.

As you read through this document, there may be information that you do not think is specific to your situation. However, we believe it is important to address any conditions you would like to be improved as a long-range project, understanding that change often takes the slow road to fruition. Sharing your ideas for improvement with the many decision-makers in a school system is essential and, often, if "professional persistence" is incorporated, your goals can be achieved.

Remember, essential components for improving an ATC's employment situation include the following:

**Perception.** The community, school administration, coaching staff and students must perceive the ATC as a professional health care provider.

**Accountability.** The ATC must be accountable for the work s/he currently provides (i.e. professional record keeping).

**Improved care.** The ATC must identify how proposed changes would improve the care provided to athletes, the community, etc.

**Budget consciousness.** The ATC must be realistic in proposing changes that will fit into the current or future budget of the school system or should identify funding alternatives.

The process of requesting change is not easy and this Position Improvement Guide is not intended to be a shortcut. It is provided to improve your chances of success when requesting a change. It will still be hard work, but with persistence, a professional attitude, proper planning and a little luck, you will have the best chance of reaching your goals.

We wish you much success in your endeavors.

Sincerely,

The Secondary School Athletic Trainers' Committee



# Chapter

# One

## Determining Your Focus

When the Secondary School Athletic Trainers' Committee published the Position Proposal Guide for the Secondary School Athletic Trainer (PPG) (Almquist, et.al. 1998), we discovered that much of the information included in the document could assist those already employed. Many ATCs who were using the PPG to improve their current employment situations requested additional help. We met and decided that the best way to help our colleagues was to list possible areas of improvement and then offer solutions and guidelines for making those changes. In this first section, we hope to help you determine your focus.

The Appropriate Medical Care for the Secondary School-Aged Athlete Task Force, in their Consensus Statement, determined that a secondary school athletic training program should provide for a designated individual who is educated and qualified to:

- Determine the individual's readiness to participate.
- Promote safe and appropriate practice, competition and treatment facilities.
- Advise on the selection, fit, function and maintenance of athletic equipment.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive emergency action plan.
- Establish protocols regarding environmental conditions.
- Develop injury and illness prevention strategies.
- Provide for on-site recognition, evaluation and immediate treatment of injury and illness, with appropriate referrals.
- Facilitate rehabilitation and reconditioning.
- Provide for psychosocial consultation and referral.
- Provide scientifically sound nutritional counseling and education.
- Participate in the development and implementation of a comprehensive athletic health care administrative system (e.g. personal health information, policies and procedures, insurance, referrals, record keeping).

### **Five Steps to Improve Your Situation**

We encourage you to examine your program using the following tools, including our five-step program to improve your situation, as well as any other techniques you determine necessary to evaluate your ability to provide a minimal athletic training program as just defined.

#### **Step 1: Determine the Ideal Situation**

*Determine every aspect of your ideal situation so that efforts are not duplicated.*

What is the optimal program? Does your ideal situation fall within the legal realm of athletic training in your state? Ensure that your goals are, in fact, realistic.

*What can be achieved easily? What can be achieved with more effort? What may not be achievable?*

Do not waste time doing something that can be done easily! You should be able to identify a list of items you would like to be addressed and changed - some of them may be accomplished without much effort or without administrative approval. All you have to do is apply yourself.

In addition, there are some things that may be great additions or changes to your program but - due to state law or district/school policy or perhaps just because of poor timing or a lack of funding - are unachievable at the moment.

*Does your ideal situation involve appropriate coverage or appropriate care?*

Another area to focus on is the concept of COVERAGE versus CARE. Coverage is what we do when we establish a coverage policy to ensure that we are available as needed to all sports, teams and participants on an equitable basis. Coverage is a matter of being there and immediately reacting.

Care is what we do when we practice the art and science of athletic training. Athletic trainers do not just tape, ice and sit in a golf cart. Anyone can do that! Athletic trainers provide valuable care. We evaluate, rehabilitate, care, counsel and educate, and are qualified to perform a variety of roles for the student athlete. We should get away from providing coverage and begin to provide care - care being the broad-based collection of tasks, concepts and philosophies included in the domains of athletic training. In fact, if you look through the *Role Delineation Study* from any year of publication, you will find that the document does not say we should provide coverage.

## **Step 2: Evaluate Your Current Situation**

*Are the changes you want to make possible with your current job description?*

Each job description is written independently. Do you know what your job description does and does not allow you to do? It may be possible to make the change simply by changing your job description, or adhering to it with support of the administration.

*Can you change your job description?*

What is the your school system's process for job description changes? Often there are procedures for changing job descriptions - know them.

*What changes can be made within your current job description?*

If you cannot make changes easily or immediately, what changes can you make that stay within the current job description? This may be the place to start. Eventually others in your school or district will see your desire, so making a future change to the job description may be easier.

*Does your institution have the capability to meet your ideal situation?*

We all have that idealistic view about our current situation and our ability to make change. However, there are some instances where the best change you can make is your job. If necessary change is not possible, serious consideration should be given to changing employers to attain the desired changes.

*What would you settle for? What would you not settle for?*

Compromise is an essential part of working within a bureaucracy. School systems are built in layers and you may have to make concessions to obtain the desired changes. What is it that you are willing to settle for? Prioritize your recommendations for change.

*What have you done or been doing to justify the desired changes to your superiors?*

As an ATC, you have been hired to provide professional services to your patients and athletes. Your employer expects you to do your best to protect them. Often, school-based administrators and coaches have impressions about what the ATC can and should provide to the school's student athletes. That impression can range from: exclusively taping ankles and applying ice; to the implementation of an athletic training health care service that encompasses the development of policies and

procedures; providing first responder care; first responder education, rehabilitation and reconditioning services for coaches; determining an athlete's status to return to play; and coordinating medical care with community physicians and other allied health care providers, etc. What SHOULD you provide and what DO you provide?

There are certain things that administrators look for in an employee. Namely, do they identify solutions along with problems? Do they do their work? Are they punctual? Positive responses to these questions are just the start to ensure that your coworkers and supervisors are behind you in your quest for improvement.

### **Step 3: Develop a Plan**

*Determining your focus is the basis for the future.*

If you perform an honest and thorough evaluation, you will identify those areas that need the most work.

Imagine performing a fitness analysis and body composition test on an athlete. First we take pictures from all angles, then we perform a caliper test on selected sites and, finally, we perform some cardiovascular, strength and flexibility testing. If we allow the athlete to choose the areas that are tested and they choose their strongest areas, then we fail to find the weakest point. This weakest point(s) is what we need to address, not avoid.

Often problem areas are right in front of our eyes. Do your coaches always complain about something in particular? Is your administration always late in communicating a change or an expectation? Such issues should be addressed first. However, just as in medicine, make sure you identify the underlying cause; do not just treat the symptoms!

After you have determined your area(s) of focus, formulate a plan. Talk to those you trust. Identify those who may have already gone through this process and get their suggestions. Sit down with your supervisor; let him/her know that you would like to improve in this area and get his/her suggestions. Many times help in making the change will be offered.

It is important to anticipate setbacks in advance and to identify the best solutions. Expect to be told "no" at least once (possibly 100 times). Also anticipate succeeding, but do not get frustrated if you do not accomplish everything you wanted to achieve. Remember to set goals and standards for success.

#### *Prioritize your plan*

As you formulate your plan, identify those things that must be achieved, those things that could be achieved and those things that it would be nice to achieve but are not necessities. Just because a school can afford it, does not mean you are entitled to the Taj Mahal of athletic training rooms or to be paid like a king. Remember, education is our business - we teach students who also happen to be athletes. What is best for the kids may not be best for you personally. The athletic training program will never be the school's major focus.

### **Step 4: Implement the Plan**

*After your detailed plan is put together, implement it.*

Be ready for setbacks and difficulties. Make sure your support team, administration, coaches, parents or whomever you have used to help identify the problem and the solution know what the plan is and whether they have a role in the solution. You will be amazed at how many people are willing to help when they see your desire to improve. Avoid surprising any group impacted by your plan; keep

everyone informed and assess their support.

The hardest part of any endeavor is beginning. Getting up the courage to enact change is ultimately up to each of us and requires honesty. Imagine trying to pull a train engine down the tracks. If we can just get it going, momentum will help us achieve our goals. After you have started, it takes much less effort to keep the train rolling; just make sure it is rolling in the right direction. Keep the momentum, and DON'T QUIT. Sometimes change takes the slow road.

### **Step 5: Evaluate the Outcome and Try Again if Necessary**

*Once the plan is complete, evaluate the results.*

Are the results what you expected? Was it harder than you anticipated? What unanticipated setbacks occurred? Has it improved your position? Why did you start this whole process; did it help you improve yourself as a professional?

Using the tools you are given in later chapters, evaluate your program or situation again to see if improvements have been made. At the same time, you will identify additional areas that require your attention.

After a short break for a breath, start all over again.

### **Things to Consider**

*Excuses*

Everyone can come up with excuses for not doing something. We only do those things we want to do. We need to throw out the excuses.

*The power of persuasion*

This document should be used to assist you in working with the administration, not against it. Use the administration as a sounding board and as a means to help you fix your problem. Administrators will be much more willing to help than if you use this to FORCE them to change something.

*Survey surrounding schools (rural versus urban)*

Make sure you find out what others are doing about similar circumstances. If no one else around you is doing what you propose, you may have a more difficult time convincing your support team that it is necessary. But remember, just because no one else is doing it does not mean it should not be done. Stick to it; if you are doing the right thing, others will follow you. Don't be afraid to be the first.

Use the statistics of similar and nearby schools if they favor your position. If their information is not favorable, it may be because their demographics do not match those of your school or their tax base is not the same and you can eliminate their data. If the information for a dissimilar school does favor you, you might be able to use it if you can minimize the differences between schools and school systems.

*Problems versus solutions*

Administrators tend to respond better to questions being asked and solutions proposed than to problems being presented. After you have identified your problem area(s), determine your solutions before you hit the administration with the problem. The word "solutions" in the preceding sentence is plural for a reason. You are giving them a choice between two (or more) viable solutions to the problem. Remember to have your proposed solutions well thought out and consider the impact your solution has on other areas of the school system.

# Chapter Two

## Assessing the Situation

We all have an idea of which areas of our programs need improvement. The following evaluations will document the needs of your specific athletic program.

### Self-Evaluation

This survey is the method used to determine where you should focus your efforts in improving your position. Sections provided later in the *Position Improvement Guide* offer tools to help improve the areas identified through this survey.

### I. Governing Administrative Policies and Procedures

#### A. Athletic Health Care Personnel

1. BOC certified athletic trainers employed full-time? Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_\_
2. BOC certified athletic trainers employed part-time? Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_\_
3. ATC contracted through physical therapy clinic or hospital/other? Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_\_
4. Coach, teacher or other staff member performs medical duties? Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_\_
5. Other Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_\_

#### B. Job Responsibilities

1. Written job descriptions define the responsibilities and legal duties of:  
Certified athletic trainer (or comparable staff member) Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_\_  
Athletic administrator Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_\_  
Coaches Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_\_
2. Athletic trainer's responsibilities to specific groups of students defined in job description and consistent with state law. Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_\_
3. Does an athletic trainer or other health care professional provide coverage:  
Full-time daily Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_\_  
Afternoons only Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_\_  
Game coverage only Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_\_
4. Preparticipation medical evaluation required as per state athletic and/or state education association guidelines. Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_\_
5. Preparticipation evaluation includes:  
Medical history Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_\_  
Physical examination Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_\_  
Medical authorization for participation Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_\_
6. Format/content of medical examination meets accepted standards as per state athletic and/or state education association guidelines. Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_\_

7. Medical examination conducted by: (check all that apply)
- |                        |              |
|------------------------|--------------|
| MD or DO               | Yes ___ No__ |
| Physician assistant    | Yes ___ No__ |
| Nurse practitioner     | Yes ___ No__ |
| Doctor of chiropractic | Yes ___ No__ |
| Other _____            | Yes ___ No__ |
8. Student-athletes/parents required to provide "informed consent or acknowledgement of risk" for participation. Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
9. Emergency information card required. Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
10. Emergency information card includes:
- |   |              |
|---|--------------|
| List of student's allergies                               | Yes ___ No__ |
| Parent/guardian's home telephone number                   | Yes ___ No__ |
| Parent/guardian's work telephone number                   | Yes ___ No__ |
| Parent/guardian's consent for emergency medical treatment | Yes ___ No__ |
| Hospital preferences                                      | Yes ___ No__ |
| Comprehensive medical insurance required                  | Yes ___ No__ |
11. Appropriate forms and records submitted and on file before first practice (all sports):
- |                                    |              |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Medical history/examination        | Yes ___ No__ |
| Informed consent or acknowledgment | Yes ___ No__ |
| Verification of medical insurance  | Yes ___ No__ |
| Emergency information card         | Yes ___ No__ |
12. Staff member who reviews and organizes records:
- |                                 |              |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Athletic trainer                | Yes ___ No__ |
| Athletic director (secretary)   | Yes ___ No__ |
| Activities director (secretary) | Yes ___ No__ |
| Other _____                     | Yes ___ No__ |
13. Does your school have a written emergency medical plan? Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
14. Does your state have laws and regulations pertaining specifically to coaches' education in regard to first aid and athletic injury situations beyond CPR? Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_

## II. Emergency Care Preparedness

### A. Emergency care personnel

1. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training required of:
- |                         |              |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| Athletic trainer(s)     | Yes ___ No__ |
| Athletic administrators | Yes ___ No__ |
| Coaches (all sports)    | Yes ___ No__ |
2. Basic emergency care training and first aid (e.g., American Red Cross) required of:
- |                         |              |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| Athletic trainer(s)     | Yes ___ No__ |
| Athletic administrators | Yes ___ No__ |
| Coaches (all sports)    | Yes ___ No__ |

**B. Emergency care in-service training**

- 1. Regular emergency care in-service training sessions held for:
  - Athletic administrators Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Coaches (all sports) Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  
- 2. Emergency care in-service training sessions include policies/ procedures for:
  - Compliance with legal duties and responsibilities Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Use of emergency transportation Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Securing emergency transportation (e.g., 911 calls) Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - General management of emergency situations Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Emergency management of specific injuries/illnesses (e.g., neck injuries, etc.) Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Notification of parent/guardian Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Completion and submission of accident reports Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  
- 3. Emergency care in-service training sessions held:
  - Quarterly Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Semiannually Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Annually Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Biannually Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_

**C. Emergency/acute health care equipment/facilities**

- 1. Emergency equipment available AND in good repair:
  - AED (automated external defibrillator) Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Vacuum splints (or appropriate alternative) Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Long spine board Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Hard neck collars (Philadelphia collars) Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Face mask removal equipment (e.g., Trainer's Angels,) Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Resuscitation mask Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Shoulder immobilizers Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Blankets Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Crutches Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Blood pressure cuff Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Stethoscope Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Latex gloves Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - First aid kit Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  
- 2. During all practices and games, emergency equipment readily accessible to:
  - Athletic trainer(s) Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Athletic administrators Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Coaches (all sports) Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  
- 3. Staff member(s) responsible for emergency care trained in the use of all emergency care equipment available. Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  
- 4. How many different practice and game facilities are used for all sports? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. On-site
    - Fall sports \_\_\_\_\_ Winter sports \_\_\_\_\_ Spring sports \_\_\_\_\_
  
  - b. Off-site
    - Fall sports \_\_\_\_\_ Winter sports \_\_\_\_\_ Spring sports \_\_\_\_\_

**D. Communication system/emergency transportation**

- 1. Telephone/direct outside line accessible during all practices and games to:
  - Athletic trainer(s) Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Athletic administrators Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Coaches (all sports) Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  
- 2. Emergency telephone numbers posted by telephone. Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  
- 3. Information to be given during emergency telephone calls posted by telephone. Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  
- 4. Emergency telephone numbers and information (e.g., on wallet-sized cards) issued to:
  - Athletic trainer(s) Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Athletic administrators Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Coaches (all sports) Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  
- 5. Emergency transportation must be able to access all fields and playing areas. Keys to gates and doors leading to these areas are distributed to:
  - Athletic trainer(s) Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Athletic administrators Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Coaches (all sports) Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  
- 6. Emergency information cards accessible during all practices and games (home and away) to:
  - Athletic trainer(s) Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Athletic administrators Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Coaches (all sports) Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  
- 7. Written policies/procedures established for securing emergency transportation (e.g., 911 call) for both practices and games. Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  
- 8. Written policy established for notification of parents and school administrators for serious injuries. Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_

**E. Accident reports**

- 1. Appropriate accident report forms available:
  - Athletic injury report Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Standard (school) accident report Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  
- 2. Policies/procedures established for competing and submitting accident reports. Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  
- 3. Criteria established for "reportable injury." Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  
- 4. Staff member responsible for filling out and filing reports:
  - Coach Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Athletic trainer(s) Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Administrator Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
  - Other Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_

### III. Injury Management Protocol and Procedures

#### **A. Records/record keeping**

1. Forms established for maintaining records regarding:

- Initial assessment Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
- Referrals to physicians Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
- Daily treatments (e.g., cold, heat, tape) Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
- Injury rehabilitation Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_

2. Form layout/content meets accepted standards

- Initial assessment Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
- Referrals to physicians Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
- Daily treatments (e.g., cold, heat, tape) Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
- Injury rehabilitation Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_

#### **B. Medical referral**

1. Protocol/procedures established for referral of injured/ill student athletes to physicians.

Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_

2. Follow-up treatment given under the direction of the physician.

Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_

3. Policy of written medical release from an MD or a DO required for return to sports participation established.

Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_

4. In the absence of a physician, return to sport participation typically determined by:

- Athletic trainer Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
- Coach Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
- Nurse Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
- Administrator Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
- Other Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_

5. Does your school have a regular system to review the effectiveness of the athletic program in preventing injury or illness?

Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_

### IV. Training Room Facilities and Operation

#### **A. Facilities/equipment**

1. Adequate space available for:

- Prepractice/event preparation (e.g., taping and wrapping) Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
- Therapeutic management (e.g., treatment tables, therapeutic modalities) Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
- Injury rehabilitation Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
- Administrative functions (e.g., desk, file cabinets, computer) Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_

2. Basic administrative/injury management equipment available:

- Desk/chair Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
- File cabinet Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
- Ice machine Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
- Refrigerator Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
- Sink/hand washing facilities Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
- Whirlpools Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_
- Heat packs Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_

Treatment/taping tables Yes \_\_ No\_\_  
Storage cabinets (for tape, gauze, wraps, etc.) Yes \_\_ No\_\_

3. Basic injury rehabilitation equipment available:
- Leg exercise device (e.g., leg press, extension machine) Yes \_\_ No\_\_
  - Shoulder exercise device (e.g., wall pulley) Yes \_\_ No\_\_
  - Free weights (e.g., dumbbells and weight cuffs) Yes \_\_ No\_\_
  - Rubber tubing (e.g., elastic tubing) Yes \_\_ No\_\_
  - Proprioceptive devices (e.g., wobble board, slide board, etc.) Yes \_\_ No\_\_
  - Cardiovascular training equipment (e.g., stationary bicycle, stair climber, etc.) Yes \_\_ No\_\_

4. Does the accessibility of the proposed athletic training room comply with the ADA? Yes \_\_ No\_\_

5. Does the proposed athletic training room have adequate HVAC (heating and ventilation)? Yes \_\_ No\_\_

6. Is the proposed athletic training room accessible equally by both male and female students? Yes \_\_ No\_\_

### **B. Control of risk factors**

1. Training room "risk factors" controlled regarding:
- Electrical safety (e.g., ground fault interrupters) Yes \_\_ No\_\_
  - Daily sanitation/cleanliness (e.g., floor and surfaces) Yes \_\_ No\_\_
  - Maintenance of therapeutic modalities Yes \_\_ No\_\_
  - Maintenance of rehabilitation exercise equipment Yes \_\_ No\_\_
  - Controlled access to training room Yes \_\_ No\_\_
  - Controlled access to storage room/cabinets Yes \_\_ No\_\_
  - Ventilation/air conditioning Yes \_\_ No\_\_
  - Suitable floor surface Yes \_\_ No\_\_

### **C. Bloodborne pathogens control (OSHA standards)**

1. Exposure control plan established regarding:
- Determination of occupational exposure (e.g., "at risk" personnel identified) Yes \_\_ No\_\_
  - Required annual training session for employees with occupational exposure Yes \_\_ No\_\_
  - Provision of Hepatitis B vaccine to "at risk" employees Yes \_\_ No\_\_
  - Policies/procedures for reporting exposure incidents Yes \_\_ No\_\_
2. Appropriate emergency controls established:
- Hand washing facilities/antiseptic hand cleaner and towels available Yes \_\_ No\_\_
  - Contaminated sharps disposal container available Yes \_\_ No\_\_
  - Regulated waste containers with biohazard label or color code available Yes \_\_ No\_\_
  - Appropriate work practice controls established Yes \_\_ No\_\_
  - Latex gloves used regularly Yes \_\_ No\_\_
  - Appropriate disinfectant (e.g., 10% bleach solution) used to disinfect work and play surfaces Yes \_\_ No\_\_
  - Proper disposal facilities available for regulated waste Yes \_\_ No\_\_
  - Proper disposal facilities available for contaminated sharps Yes \_\_ No\_\_
  - Proper disposal facilities available for contaminated laundry towels Yes \_\_ No\_\_

## V. Professional Expectations and Responsibilities

### **A. Attire**

#### 1. Professional appearance

- Does the ATC have a specific dress code s/he must adhere to for practices? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
Does the ATC have a specific dress code s/he must adhere to for games? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
Is the ATC allowed to determine his/her own dress and grooming standards? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

### **B. Salary**

#### 1. Are you:

- Considered a certified staff? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
Considered classified staff? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
Eligible for tenure when qualified? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
Paid from the same pay scale as the teachers? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
Receiving the same benefit package as the teachers? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
Eligible for comp time? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
Receiving vacation/personal and sick time? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
A 10-month employee? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
An 11-month employee? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

### **C. Budget**

1. Do you have total control over what is purchased and from whom? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
2. Are you asked what you want and then the administration cuts what they do not have money for? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
3. If you run out of a supply, is there money to buy more through the course of the year? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
4. Is there a separate (capital) budget for items that are reusable, or over \$100.00? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
5. Have the number of athletes or the number of sports/teams been increased, while the amount of money provided for supplies been held constant or decreased? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
6. Does the booster club(s) provide money to teams and sports for improvements? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
7. Does the booster club(s) regularly request information on needs from the administration or even yourself? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
8. Are you allowed to sell items such as sports drinks, tape, mouthpieces, etc. from the training room as a fund-raiser? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
9. Based on the number of sports, teams and athletes in the target facility's athletic programs, what is the suggested size of the athletic training facility including rehabilitation/reconditioning area? (Almquist 1998) \_\_\_\_\_ sq. ft.

## VI. Additional Questions to Consider

1. Does your target facility or district currently have a sports medicine or athletic training course or class in the curriculum? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_



# Chapter Three

## Working Within the School System

There are many athletic trainers who enjoy working with secondary school athletes. They also enjoy many of the advantages that working at the secondary school setting offers: higher salaries and benefits; Sundays and summers off; etc. These advantages have convinced some ATCs that the secondary school environment is the place to look for work. These perks, or benefits, can far outweigh the disadvantages of the setting.

However, teaching a full load plus the demanding athletic training schedule often results in poor performance in one or both areas, or the athletic trainer gives up and leaves the profession. Burnout, for some, is inevitable. How can one find a happy balance? Is it possible to reduce the teaching load without affecting the salary? To find the answer or solution, you must first start with a plan.

### **How does the system work?**

Before change can take place, you have to understand the administrative structure of your school district (e.g., flow chart, hierarchy, etc.). It might be best to start at the lower level of the chain of command, build support there and then move upward.

Next, research the policy on FTEs (full-time educators). Your district might require one FTE for every X number of students. This is a very important concept to understand to ensure a successful proposal to your administration. Your proposal must take into account the many aspects of this area from your school and/or district.

### **Teaching alternatives**

To reduce the teaching load, consider an alternative like providing lunchtime or in-school suspension supervision or acting as hall monitor, dean, assistant principal, etc. Similar to this type of proposal is elimination of the teaching component of the position; a stand-alone position is optimal in the minds of many ATCs. Justifying such a change will take effort on your part as well as by your support team, which includes site administration, coaches, athletic personnel, union representatives, etc.

### **Identifying Sources of Support**

Complete a survey of public perception to gather information to help develop a proposal and identify those who will support your efforts. This will help you determine what people really think about your program and the school's athletic program as a whole. This will become valuable data as you compose your proposal.

### **Ideas or Strategies**

1. Develop an athletic training report. Chart the number of hours spent teaching (class load, number of daily preparations, class size, teacher preparation [grading, class preparation, calling parents, etc.]).
2. Chart the hours spent on athletic training (injury evaluation, rehabilitation, game coverage, education of coaches, communication with parents, coaches, physicians, administration, etc.) on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. Include the number of athletes participating.

3. Log the number of athletes evaluated and rehabilitated. Chart the amount of money that conducting rehabilitation at school saves. An excellent article was written and published in *NATA News* in the June 1993 issue, "Showing Our Value in \$ and Cents" (Berry 1993). This article outlines an excellent procedure to show what you do. Care must be used not to say that the ATC provided a certain dollar amount of services; the ATC should be certain to state that s/he provided the "equivalent of" this amount of services.
4. Provide a history of the turnover rate of teachers/athletic trainers at your school or within the area.
5. Provide information on how athletic trainers are regulated in your state.
6. Develop a presentation for local parent groups (booster club, PTA, etc.); include information from:
  - Increased contact with injured athletes during the school day
  - Better communication with parents and physicians
  - Increased rehabilitation opportunities during the school day
  - Include either letters of support or testimonies from the local medical community
  - Decreased turnover ratio of the ATC employee (therefore more consistency)

Additionally, the ATC must be sure to identify the following points and take care to ensure that they have been accounted for.

*Who really has the power in the school or school system?*

This is the person who ultimately pulls the strings or approves the proposal. Many times this is the superintendent or an assistant superintendent, director of personnel and/or finance, director of athletics/activities or the school board. Make sure you know who this person is. Make sure you also know where the union, booster club(s) and secretaries fit into the power structure.

*Follow the chain of command!*

This cannot be overstated. If you upset someone by going over his/her head, s/he will squash your proposal before it ever hits the table. Make sure everyone knows what is going on and how they fit in.

By first understanding your situation, identifying your sources of support, collecting data and then developing a presentation, you have a route by which to better your situation. The rest is up to you.

# Chapter Four

## Changing Your Employment Model

### Support Staff to Teacher/Athletic Trainer

Support staff members do not appear on the certified teaching scale. Examples are:

- Custodial workers
- Groundskeepers/maintenance personnel
- Campus monitors
- Technology aides
- Classroom aides

Certified athletic trainers interested in transitioning from a support staff position to that of an athletic trainer/teacher have many issues to consider. There are various disparities in the two roles, most notably in the pay, benefits and responsibilities. It is imperative that ATCs who are considering teaching possess a clear understanding of the positives and negatives associated with this new role before committing to it.

### **Considerations**

Adding teaching responsibilities to the already full plate of the secondary school athletic trainer generally means longer working hours, devoting a significant amount of time to class preparation and grading and losing schedule flexibility. However, athletic trainer/teachers can look forward to a higher salary, better benefits and an opportunity to instruct students in an appropriate environment. The ability to teach on a reduced schedule needs to be considered. If it is not an option immediately, keep it in mind for the future.

Each individual should evaluate his/her situation to determine whether the benefits outweigh the additional obligations and make a decision accordingly.

### **Making the Transition**

For athletic trainers who want to become certified teaching employees, there are several steps that should be taken to ensure that the transition is supported by school administration.

*Learn state regulations* - The first step for a prospective teacher is to determine whether s/he possesses the qualifications to teach in his/her state. The best place to obtain this information is from the credential analyst at the school district office or the state department of education's licensure office.

*Gauge academic needs* - ATCs already qualified to teach specific subjects should determine if there is a need for their classroom expertise in the district/school. For instance, there typically is not a great need for physical education teachers. However, school districts often lack an adequate number of science, math, English, core or special education teachers. The ATC interested in teaching should attempt to match his/her qualifications to the school district's needs to ensure a successful career shift.

*Gain administrative approval* - ATCs should seek out school administrators and gain their support for applications for emergency/internship credentials. This is a great way to get a foot in the door to a

teaching assignment. It is not, however, the easiest to complete. This process should be investigated before committing to an assignment.

Most school systems and states offer emergency credentials (which may be termed differently in different states) to those who wish to work in the school system. Recently, the *No Child Left Behind* policy has changed how these credentials are offered. An employee is given temporary credentials based on life experience, prior course work completed and training in a specific vocation or profession. The employee must then complete additional course work in the field of education and related areas based on an evaluation of his/her transcripts, etc. If you are interested in this type of credentialing, care must be used to ensure that it is available in your state.

*Negotiate classroom obligations* - Petitioning for a reduction in class schedule will enable the ATC to fully meet all needs of the new position. It is extremely difficult to teach a full load each day while providing comprehensive athletic health care. Establishing this fact and requesting adjustments to a rigid teaching schedule are important to maintaining one's mental health and career goals.

*Start a class* - ATCs can demonstrate a benefit to both students and administration by developing an athletic training curriculum. This provides the school with another academic offering, while giving students an added elective. It will allow the ATC's area of expertise to be of use. This curriculum should be developed and adopted by the school district before any position shift. Consider the fact that the school may not be able to offer the reduced teaching position right away. If this is the case, see if the administration would consider it over the long term. It may be worth the wait. Additionally, the state department of education (or your school district if there are other high schools in the district) may have already adopted a sports medicine or athletic training curriculum. Follow this curriculum (this will occur much more quickly than if you invent your own) and you are on the road to success.

### **Stipend to Salary**

For an athletic trainer to be considered for a newly created, full-time position, a foundation must be laid offering justification for that position. A prudent ATC will evaluate his/her situation to determine the needs of the principal, the athletic director and the coaches. The ATC should demonstrate how those needs are being met, or s/he can show how they cannot be met under the existing conditions. This will offer the ATC a positive position to begin negotiations. Regardless of the district's needs, there are certain things that can be done to provide justification for a salaried position.

*Exude professionalism* - Supervisors in any organization want to feel that they are getting what they pay for - if not more. This is especially true in the educational setting, where tight budgets are the norm. There may be reluctance for a site administrator to hire someone who dresses in shorts and t-shirts every day. When an ATC acts and dresses as a health care professional, his/her credibility is enhanced. In fact, it is imperative that ATCs present themselves as professional, mature faculty members at all times. This leads to an increase in perceived worth and a better chance of securing a salaried position.

*Demonstrate reliability* - Being on time and ready for practices and games is critical to showing value to administration. Athletes rely on their athletic trainer. When the ATC can show that s/he is indispensable to the district's athletics program, it illustrates a need and makes permanently securing athletic training services an administrative priority.

*Maintain documentation* - Keeping accurate records of both injuries and treatments will assist in justifying a full-time position. Not only will these documents show what the athletic trainer does on a

daily basis, they will also offer a look at the money saved by having an on-site health care professional administering to the school's athletes.

*Distribute season reports* - Superiors need to be informed of the athletic trainer's roles and responsibilities. End-of-season reports provide injury information, while cluing in superiors to the significant role an ATC plays in the athletics program. Distributing these reports in a timely fashion also shows how the ATC goes above and beyond the call of duty to keep administrators in the loop. Record keeping was once considered a necessary evil for an ATC. It should now be considered the best offensive weapon to enhance an athletic training position.

*Gain support* - Organizations such as the youth football league, Little League baseball, the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts or any other community-based organization may benefit from the services of an ATC. ATCs who volunteer their time providing educational or athletic training services to the community gain direct access to a segment of the population that can be very influential in the decisions made on campus and in their school district.

*Educate supervisors and peers* - When others realize the education, background and responsibilities of the ATC, there is increased level of respect. Athletic trainers who portray themselves as health care providers, rather than merely "tapers," have the respect of those whose opinions matter, which often leads to an easier time securing a full-time position.

# Chapter Five

## Understanding Contracts and Negotiations

The following are key questions that should be asked regarding your contract and contract negotiations. They will help to ensure that the certified athletic trainer receives adequate current and retirement benefits. In addition, the job description is a vital part of your contract. It is imperative that you understand what you are being asked to provide for the school.

*Do you have a copy of your contract?*

It is prudent to have a copy of your contract in your files. The copy should be dated and signed by both the employer (school district) and the certified athletic trainer. The contract should include a detailed job description. In the event a question arises regarding the certified athletic trainer's duties and responsibilities, this document will provide immediate clarification.

*Do you have the same contract as teachers?*

Even in the same state, specific details in secondary school athletic trainer contracts may vary from district to district. Having the same contract as teachers does not necessarily mean it is identical in all aspects. Ensure that all areas of compensation are considered. For instance, are you on the same pay scale but not the same benefits package (or vice versa)? Do you have the same work hours as a teacher? There may be other areas to consider; be thorough in your investigation to ensure you are getting your fair share.

*Are you part-time or full-time?*

To answer this question, you need to determine how many hours are considered part-time versus full-time for the school district. Sometimes, this category affects the benefits you receive. If dual responsibilities are expected (teacher/athletic trainer), how will you be classified? The school district may list you as a full-time teacher and part-time certified athletic trainer. If you are eligible for tenure, it will only be for the full-time position that is held. Budget cuts may result in the elimination of all part-time positions, namely the athletic training position. Regardless of what is on paper, explain to the school administrators that athletic training is a full-time position and push to get it listed as such.

*Is your contract for 10, 11 or 12 months?*

The ideal position is 10 or 11 months. Summer allows for downtime to get away from your athletic training room. During this time, many certified athletic trainers choose to make extra money by working at camps or non-profession-related places of employment. Others like the freedom of relaxing and not adhering to a formal schedule. The certified athletic trainer can use this time to refuel and prepare for fall preseason camps. Whatever the case, a 10-month contract provides the opportunity to make the summer months fit your needs.

With a 12-month contract, vacation time becomes a major concern. How much vacation time is awarded? Will vacation time increase with longevity? When can vacation time be taken? Most 12-month school employees can request a vacation at any time during the school year, but an ATC has to consider coverage of sports when on vacation. Can you choose to use your time during the winter or spring break? Who will cover practices and games while you are away? These are all questions that create conflict with a 12-month contract.

*Can you take advantage of all benefits in the contract such as "buyouts" of unused sick time?*  
Most contracts allow for "buyouts" or payment for unused sick time at retirement. It is important to inquire where the certified athletic trainer is placed in relation to other staff in the school district (teachers, administrators, support staff and custodians). The certified athletic trainer should not be slighted with sick time "buyouts" compared with other district employees.

*Do you belong to a union?*

Some certified athletic trainers are considered "independents" or "singletons." These terms mean that they negotiate their own contract. If a conflict arises, however, they have no one to legally support them. For this reason alone, it is of the utmost importance to find a way to join your union. When employed at the secondary school level in most states, 80% of your union dues is automatically deducted from your pay. With this in mind, it is to your advantage to join the union and voluntarily pay the remaining 20%. Be wary of district personnel directors. They try to discourage the certified athletic trainer from joining the union. Not having them as "independents" lessens the personnel directors' administrative control. In short, on accepting the position, investigate the district union representative(s) and express an interest in joining both the local and state unions.

*Does your Workers' Compensation cover you for a six-day workweek?*

On the average, certified athletic trainers normally work six days a week, whereas teachers and other district employees follow a five-day workweek. Typically, a school district contract will cover injuries on the job incurred in a traditional setting. Knowing this, review your contract carefully. Most contracts are similar to form letters with specific insertions for job descriptions, sick time and compensation. The athletic training contract should indicate Workers' Compensation coverage for a six-day workweek. This should include, but not be limited to, weekends, holidays, and away events.

*Do you have the same benefits as teachers?*

Some contracts put restrictions on the type and amount of insurance the employer will provide for you. For example, if you are a part-time employee, your benefits might be limited. Another option is to compensate the certified athletic trainer more but to offer no benefits. In the latter example, you will need to pay for your insurance plan. Although compensation rate is important, a comprehensive benefits package may prove more valuable in the long run.

**If you are on the teacher's contract:**

*Do you work the same number of months, days and hours per week?*

Teachers work a specific number of hours per day, days per week and months per year. Is your contract similar? How is it different? If different, the certified athletic trainer must ask himself or herself, "Is there a distinct advantage being taken of me?" If the answer to this question is "yes," then it is time to consider renegotiating your contract.

*Do you have the same holidays?*

Teachers get time off for certain national holidays, winter break and spring break. When school is not in session, practices and games usually continue without interruption. Are you expected to provide medical coverage during those times? Also, it is not uncommon for various teams to schedule their practices throughout the day. What may be a two-hour practice for each team results in an eight-hour day for the certified athletic trainer. Are you required to remain on-site for the entire day, or are you permitted to stay for only a portion of the practice? If the ATC only covers a portion of the practices, which practices will be covered? In the case of those "long" days, sometimes certified athletic trainers residing close to school return home and place themselves "on-call" if needed. Keep in mind; that all parties (certified athletic trainer, athletic director, school administrator and superintendent) must agree to this decision. Also, it would be wise to include this clause in your contract.

*Are you on the same pay scale as teachers?*

The pay scale may vary depending on:

- Years of experience at the high school level
- Years of experience at an outside position
- Hours worked per day
- Hours worked per week
- Independent versus union employee

The easiest method is to be placed on the same pay scale as the teachers. The certified athletic trainer will know where s/he began and where s/he is going. In addition, the school district will know just how much to budget for that specific line item. Through this example, one can see how being on the pay scale is beneficial to both parties.

*Do you get compensated pay/time for overtime?*

Once determined how many working hours per week is expected of you, anything exceeding that number should be considered overtime. School districts may handle this in two different ways. One way is to have a pay rate per hour be predetermined and applied to all overtime hours. More common, however, is to receive a seasonal stipend equal to that of the highest paid coach of that season. The second way allows for time off (not vacation time) to be awarded in lieu of money. Usually, however, the time cannot be accumulated and rolled over from year to year.

*Is there a stipulation for comp time?*

Are total hours determined at the end of each day, week or pay period? Due to time variations from day to day, some school districts base overtime hours on anything above and beyond a 40-hour week or a 120-hour pay period. If this is the case, it is conceivable that you can work 4 hours on one day and then 12 hours on the next day. If, at the conclusion of the week you acquire less than 40 hours, overtime might not be a consideration.

**If you have your own contract ("independent" or "singleton"):**

*Do you negotiate for yourself?*

An "independent" or "singleton" refers to those negotiating their own contract. These individuals are not in a union. As a negotiator, you must be somewhat hard-nosed. Although this approach is required to get what you want, it may produce unwanted tension between you and the personnel director. This tension may make future negotiations much more difficult.

The advantage of being an independent is that you are the master of your own fate. The disadvantage of being an independent is that you are the master of your own fate. If you are not familiar with contract negotiations, the final results might not be in your favor. Unfortunately, you have no representation from union professionals experienced in dealing with these situations.

*Do you negotiate yearly or in conjunction with the teachers' contract?*

Most independents negotiate their contract on a year-to-year basis. As mentioned above, under "Do you negotiate for yourself," this produces unwanted tension each year. In addition, it forces you to use your free time to build your case for a pay increase. If one is found in that position, the most common method of case building is to conduct a survey of secondary school certified athletic trainers in your district and surrounding area.

*Do you have your own pay scale?*

Most independents have their own pay scale. On the average, the levels on the scale do not equally correlate with the corresponding levels on the teachers' scale. The levels on the athletic training

scale (excluding stipends) are typically much lower.

*Does your scale max out below a teacher's max?*

In addition to the individual levels being lower than the teachers' scale, the independent certified athletic trainer's scale usually has a maximum that is below a teacher's maximum.

*Do you get the same percent increase per year as teachers?*

Regardless of how the certified athletic trainer scale compares to that of the teachers in your district, you should still get the same percent increase per year. Carefully review your contract and aggressively work to have this clause included in your contract.

*What are your benefits?*

As long as you are a full-time employee, most school districts will offer the independent a full benefits package. Meet with other independents in the district and inquire about their benefits package. Again, a survey of secondary school certified athletic trainers in your district and surrounding area would be an invaluable tool to use during your negotiations. Refer to "Do you have the same benefits as teachers?"

*How many days/hours do you work per week? Do you get compensated pay/time for overtime?*

Meet with other independents in the district and ask how many hours they work and if they are compensated for overtime. A survey of secondary school certified athletic trainers in your district and surrounding area would be an invaluable tool to use during your negotiations. Refer to "If you are on the teacher's contract."

*Is there a stipulation for comp time?*

Meet with other independents in the district and inquire how they are compensated for overtime. A survey of secondary school certified athletic trainers in your district and surrounding area would be an invaluable tool to use during your negotiations. Refer to "If you are on the teacher's contract."

*Is your position eligible for tenure? What are your state statutes/regulations regarding tenure?*

Tenure was established to protect academic freedom and to prevent schools from basing decisions to hire or fire based on favoritism and local politics. The tenure statutes that developed typically list standards and procedures that must be followed by school districts before they may dismiss a staff member, thereby attempting to eliminate arbitrary dismissals. In short, tenure relates to job security. Not all states provide tenure and not all positions are eligible for tenure. Make sure that you know your status in relation to tenure. In addition, state laws vary from state to state. The example below may or may not apply to you.

Most people are under the misconception that "tenure" directly corresponds to "total job protection." Actually, that is not the case. True, it will be much more difficult to release an employee who is tenured, but it can happen. Keep in mind, however, that a school district must establish a permissible basis for termination. Dismissal must be based only on job-related reasons - not based on political expediency or motivated by a discriminatory reason. Equally important, a school district cannot release a tenured certified athletic trainer and hire another one with the same job description.

Case in point: a full-time tenured certified athletic trainer can be replaced only with a part-time certified athletic trainer or another full-time certified athletic trainer with a different job description. Regardless of the reason for termination, the certified athletic trainer has a constitutional right to pre-termination notice, an explanation of evidence for dismissal, an opportunity to respond and a hearing in front of an impartial party. (The ATC position is not always a tenured position. An athletic direc-

tor could choose not to rehire an ATC even though s/he is tenured as a teacher.)

Check your state department of education's Web site for an explanation of all statutes and regulations. Details may also be located on the district's Web site, within the district's policy manual and at your local or school library. For the inexperienced, the legal language of these documents may be difficult to interpret. For this reason, your union representative is the best resource to answer any questions in layman's terms.

*Are you required by your union/department of education to be tenured?*

Tenure usually occurs, with an entry-level certificate, at the completion of three years and one day of employment in the public school sector. If you are on the teachers' contract, you will be eligible for tenure. As an independent, it is the discretion of the school district to award you tenure.

## **Administrative details**

*Do you have a job description?*

Contracts are binding legal documents indicating an agreement between two or more parties. They do not necessarily have to include job descriptions. To eliminate conflict regarding your duties and responsibilities, the certified athletic trainer should have a detailed job description included in the written contract.

*Do you know what your job description states?*

Always carefully read and review your contract before signing it. Clauses differing from the verbal agreement between you and the school personnel director may, intentionally or unintentionally, be added or deleted in the written form. Every time your contract is renewed, it would be good practice to read and review it before signing.

*Do you have duties other than athletic training?*

Some school districts hire a certified athletic trainer with the assumption that the person is available to perform various non-athletic training duties throughout the day such as: substitute teacher, hall duty or security. If this is the case, you must ask yourself these questions:

"Is it in my job description?"

"Will I be compensated for the extra duties?"

"Does my Workers' Compensation cover me while performing these duties?"

"If there is a conflict between the non-athletic training duties and my role as a certified athletic trainer, which takes priority?"

Presently, we live in a litigious society. To avoid litigation, the certified athletic trainer must always act in a prudent manner. During the school day, wear only one hat at a time. For example, when acting as a substitute teacher, DO NOT practice athletic training. If an athlete visits your classroom while you are supervising a class and you direct your attention toward the athlete, class supervision is compromised. In the event that a student in the classroom somehow becomes injured while you are working with an athlete, you will be held liable for "lack of adequate supervision."

*Who supervises you?*

In most cases, the athletic director supervises the certified athletic trainer. Other personnel known to serve as supervisors are the director of student health services, school/district nurse, health and physical education department chair and building principal.

*How are observations and evaluations conducted?*

The designated supervisor is responsible for observing and evaluating the certified athletic trainer. Due to the nature of your job and most supervisors' lack of experience in dealing with health care,

evaluations should not be based on injury management methods and techniques. Rather, job performance should be graded on: professional conduct, communication skills, record keeping and adherence to standing orders. The number of observations per year should be equal to that of the other teachers or independent staff members, depending on the contract. Usually, written evaluations can be reviewed by a school employee a minimum of 24 hours following a meeting with the supervisor. The certified athletic trainer should be permitted to explain any disagreements, in written form, on their evaluation. Finally, the evaluation should be signed by the supervisor and certified athletic trainer and a copy secured in your files.

*Are you reimbursed for continuing education?*

In most cases, school districts will reimburse for continuing education up to a certain predetermined amount. The situation may be handled in one of two ways. One method is to place the certified athletic trainer in the general continuing education account shared by everyone in the district. Be aware that this account typically becomes depleted by the second half of the school year. As a result, all continuing education opportunities offered in the second half of the school year are denied. The second and most desirable method is to initiate a separate continuing education account to be used only by the certified athletic trainer. This method allows you the flexibility to pick and choose your continuing educational opportunities without the fear of insufficient funds toward the end of the school year. An argument in your favor is that the certified athletic trainer MUST accumulate 80 continuing education units within three years or certification will be forfeited.

*Does your administration encourage active participation in professional organizations?*

Performing athletic training duties at your school can be an exciting, and often challenging, experience. Most rewarding, however, may be the opportunity to contribute to the profession on state, district and national levels. Come to terms with your administration regarding your growth as a professional. Ask if they would permit a professional leave (usually no more than a few days) for you to participate on professional committee or office positions.

**Conclusion**

Understanding the legal aspects of your employment contract can make or break your position and personal satisfaction. Ensure that you know what you are required to provide for your employer. In addition, make sure that you know what they are required to provide you. Many benefits go unused by employees, mainly because they do not know about them.

# Chapter

# Six

## Improving Your Bottom Line

Salaries vary widely across the country depending on the type of position held by the ATC. Typically, the best salaries are found with positions that include teaching duties in addition to athletic training responsibilities.

Full-time teacher salaries range from \$23,000 to \$65,000+ depending on years of experience, degrees held and numbers of credits earned. It is important to remember that public school salaries are typically higher than those of private schools, due to the funding that comes from local and state governments.

Most school district teaching salary contracts are based on a grid or step format where you move across the pay scale as you earn predetermined college credits as well as advancing with each year of experience. There are barriers in both directions. Typically a school district will recognize only 15 years of continuous experience and a master's degree of some kind with 30 to 45 credits beyond that degree. Often there is an education barrier of a BA +30/45 credits, where the only way you can advance to the next level is if you earn your master's degree. So it is in your best interest financially to earn your master's degree as quickly as you can. Most state departments of education require teachers to earn college credits to remain certified to teach. Most contracts use some type of advancement formula to determine salary: 3% x 3% is one example. With each year of experience, you get an additional 3% of your salary and an additional 3% if you advance academically. Listed below is an example of a northwest school district's pay schedule based on six years of employment.

Years Experience	BA/BS	BA+9	BA+30	BA+45/MA	MA+9	MA+15
0	25,923	26,629	27,395	29,115	30,076	31,580
1	26,629	27,395	28,223	30,076	31,580	33,159
2	27,395	28,223	29,115	31,580	33,159	34,817
3	28,223	29,115	30,076	33,159	34,817	36,558
4	29,115	30,076	33,159	34,817	36,558	38,386
5	30,076	31,580	34,817	36,558	38,386	40,305

*(Courtesy Independent Public School District of Boise City)*

So from one year to the next you could earn as much as 6% or as little as 3% more than the previous year. An advantage of being a certified teacher as well as a certified athletic trainer is that you are often "guaranteed" a salary increase from year to year due to a negotiated teaching contract.

Part-time teaching positions are paid depending on percentage of school day worked. FTE, or full-time equivalent, is the term used to denote this percentage or, more correctly, decimal. For example, .3 FTE would equate to teaching three classes of a nine-class day, which means your salary would be 30% of that of a full-time teacher. However, many school districts realize that when hiring an athletic trainer/teacher, you may be teaching only a partial schedule but you are working a full day plus

extended time, so that is factored into your teaching salary, often placing you on a full-time teaching status.

Stipends are the most common way athletic trainers can earn additional income beyond that of their teaching salary. Activity and athletic stipends are unique to each school district. Some athletic trainers may earn a stipend for each sport season, others may earn an annual stipend, and others still have a formula based on experience and education factored into a predetermined base salary. This amount varies greatly - from as low as \$4,000 to as high as \$20,000 annually.

There are many different scenarios in which certified athletic trainers are employed in the high school setting. The most common are full-time athletic trainer/no teaching responsibilities, full-time athletic trainer/teaching responsibilities and clinical outreach program. Only you can determine how you want to practice if you want to be a high school athletic trainer.

It is difficult to negotiate a raise in your individual salary because it is often tied into a school district's master contract with the local teachers organization. With the master contract, you (as a school district employee) may be eligible for the benefits afforded to full-time employees; a comprehensive health package including medical, dental and vision; a life insurance plan; and a retirement plan. You will need to investigate the possibilities of enrollment in any of these plans. Keep in mind that if you are a school district's first certified athletic trainer or replacing an established professional, benefits could be new ground for the school district. So be prepared to explain why you should be eligible for these benefits. An area where you can and often do have the opportunity to improve your salary is with your athletic training pay if you receive a stipend. The best way to show why an increase is warranted is to show what you have done and are doing to provide the best care to your student-athletes. To do that you need to keep well-documented records of injury evaluation, treatments and communications with coaches, physicians and parents (see Chapter 5). If you show the need and why you are vital to a school's athletic department, then you are providing proof of why a pay increase is warranted.

### **Some alternative ideas on how to "increase" your bottom line**

Another way to improve your bottom line is to work at getting your school or school district to provide full compensation for professional meetings to improve your skills. School districts will often have monies available for professional development. This may not seem like a "salary boost," but if you are successful in getting a meeting paid for, that means MORE money for you that you DO NOT have to pay out of your pocket to stay certified as an athletic trainer. Other sources of travel money are your athletic director and school parent groups, whether it is a PTO/PTA type of organization or the school's booster club. Do NOT be afraid to ask the parent groups for help in attending meetings to improve your skills. They are often more than willing to help, considering you are taking care of their children.

The tools you want to use to show why it is necessary to attend these meetings are the BOC's role delineation and your injury and treatment logs. To stay BOC certified, an ATC must maintain CEUs, which are gained by attending the meetings. You must show why you need to stay current in this allied health care profession. An administrator expects nothing less of a teacher and a parent will not accept anything but the best for his/her child.

As a certified athletic trainer, there are other expenses, besides earning CEUs, that you must incur to practice your skills, such as NATA membership, state association membership, individual state board of medicine registration fees and liability insurance. This can add up to close to \$1,000 a year in out-of-pocket expenses. Talk to your athletic director, principal or appropriate school district official

to negotiate the possibility of having these expenses covered. You may not get everything you ask for the first time around, but keep at it - keep planting those ideas with your administration.

The last thing you need to keep in mind if you do end up paying for your education, association and registration fees is to save your receipts. This will help you when its time for you to file your income taxes. Have an accountant complete your taxes and show your receipts. S/he may be able to apply that as deductible, which means more income for you in the long run.

# Chapter

# Seven

## Increasing Your Budget

As you attempt to stay within your budget every year there are always a number of items you would like to acquire to better serve your athletes. The following points are basic strategies to improve your budget. Remember, it can take time to gather the necessary resources, support and supplies you would like - be patient.

### **Evaluate the current budget**

Where do budget funds come from (school-based, PTA, PTO, boosters, etc.)? Often you will be given two or three different funds or budgets to use depending on what you are buying and how much you are spending.

*Supplies or maintenance and operations (M&O) budgets* are for those items that are expendable or consumable and/or cost less than the designated amount as set by the school board.

In many districts this amount is \$100, but it may be more or less. This amount is set for purchasing one item. For example, if a case of tape costs \$40 and you want to buy 20 cases for the year, you would use this budget for that purchase. The extended cost would be \$800, but the single item cost is below the limit so the item could be purchased from the supplies or M&O budget.

Another type of budget is the *capital budget*, which is typically used for those items that are reused year after year and/or those items that cost more than the designated amount as determined by the school board.

This is the budget from which stationary bicycles, ice machines, modalities, golf carts, etc. are purchased. It is important to understand how your district works its budgets and purchasing before requesting a major increase in funding or a major purchase.

Still another type of budget used by some districts may be titled "*Special Projects*" or something similar. This type of budget is for those purchases that require creativity, additional funding from various departments, or construction/contractor involvement. When requesting facility changes, remodeling, additions, new major equipment (scoreboards, etc.), this type of budget may be used. Be sure to find out if something like this can be used for your request.

### **Types of budget processes**

In his book *Management Strategies in Athletic Training*, Richard Ray, in 1994, provides an in-depth look at budgeting and the processes required to be successful. This text and others that focus on this area are suggested reading to ensure the ATC has a very strong grasp on the budgeting process before making requests for additional funds.

#### *Spending Ceiling Budget*

This type of budget is what many school systems use. The school or school district gives the ATC a set amount to work with for the year based on the expenditures of the previous year. The only stipulation is that any purchase(s) that exceed the total used in the previous budget cycle must be justified and approved by the appropriate supervisor. Increases in this type of budget are usually based

on the inflation rate.

### *Spending Reduction Budget*

Schools typically use a spending reduction budget. In this type of budget, the athletic trainer must show that s/he can use less to provide the same services. If the type of budgeting process employed in the school system is a spending ceiling, then the ATC would be asked to reduce spending by X%. Purchases over this amount would have to be justified and approved.

### *Zero-Based Budgeting*

This type of budgeting requires the ATC to justify every expenditure requested.

### *Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Evaluation System*

The PPBES is a complicated system that is rarely used by the ATC for a yearly budget. This system looks at long-term projected expenses and income to produce a budget based on the set goals and objectives of the school or athletic department in addition to the athletic training program.

### *Fixed Budgeting*

This type of budget is typically where you see the employer ask the ATC to budget on the projected income and expenses of the department on a monthly basis. This is a somewhat difficult (and mostly inappropriate) type of budgeting for schools to use, as income is rare in schools.

### *Variable Budgeting*

Variable budgeting is used to adjust expenditures monthly so as not to exceed income on a monthly basis. Like fixed budgeting, this is rarely used and inappropriate in a school system due to lack of income.

### *Lump Sum Budgeting*

This type of budgeting is typically seen in school systems. The district gives a school a specific amount of money to run its programs. The school/principal then divides the money up between the departments and allows the departments and teachers/ATCs to determine the needs of the program and spend accordingly. Spending ceiling and spending reduction budgets are examples of this type of budget.

### *Line Item Budgeting*

This type of system requires the ATC to justify expenses based on predetermined categories, or "line items." For instance, consumable supplies would be one category, whereas travel would be another. Insurance, printing/copies, continuing education, etc. would all be possible categories. The ATC must then spend only what in each line item has been allocated, as money from one line item cannot be transferred to another without permission (or at all).

### *Performance Budgeting*

Performance budgeting is similar to line item budgeting as the budget is divided up into categories or performance objectives. For instance, rehabilitation, pregame/prepractice taping, administration and education may all be some of these categories. Budgets are then allocated to fund the requirements of each of these tasks to ensure that each of the objectives is met. This is a difficult and time-consuming type of budgeting and is not usually used in a secondary school setting.

### **Additional questions to ask when formulating your proposal**

- Are these sources/budgets stable?
- Are these sources/budgets dependent on the whims of the principal, AD or others?

- Is the budget and facility up-to date?
- What percentage of the budget is spent on consumable supplies, capital or large ticket items and continuing education?
- Can you use educational funds to purchase supplies for both educational experiences and athletic department needs?
- Are there ways to reapportion funds or save money and spend it elsewhere?

### **Identify areas of need/deficiencies**

*Supporting objective documents to justify request for increase in these areas*

- Has there been an increase in athletics as far as the number of athletes, teams or seasons?
- Has there been an extension of the season(s)?

*Subjective reasons for increase*

- Identify areas (persons) of support, both internal and external.
- Secure local donations from parents groups, civic organizations, corporate sponsors and physicians groups.
- Run your own fundraisers.
- Check with your appropriate school administrators for prior approval of these types of donations.
- Have patience with these groups; if they turn you down, thank them for considering your request. Return the following year and make a new request. If they approve your request, do not forget to acknowledge their support.
- Work with your administration (principal, business officer and safety/risk management personnel) to replace or purchase new equipment.
- Will these sources be continuing, or are they available one time or for the short term?

## Chapter

# Eight

## Improving Your Facility

Every ATC working in the secondary school setting dreams of a big, beautiful and functional athletic training room outfitted with all the latest equipment and "toys." There is nothing wrong with this dream, but you may have to start small.

When developing a plan to expand an athletic training facility, it makes sense to come up with a "wish list." The foundation of your wish list can include expanding the athletic training room to encompass more square footage, more equipment or maybe a larger or separate office.

### **Making your case for expansion**

Once the wish list has been established, a rationale for each component of that list needs to be created. Administrators will want to know how these improvements will benefit the students. They will be hesitant to allocate funds to a project if they don't understand how it will help the students. For instance, how will an increase in square footage benefit the student athlete? How will the athletes benefit from the new equipment? How can a separate athletic training room office benefit the student athletes? Answer these questions prior to asking the administration for funds.

Being able to show an increase in the number of athletes treated or evaluated in the training room from year to year is an excellent argument for expansion. Records must be kept in order to show an increase in the number of athletes receiving treatment in the athletic training room. An accurate account of the number of treatments and evaluations performed in the existing training room will be very important.

More athletes using the athletic training room may be the result of an increase in the number of sports offered by the school. Growing enrollment at school can result in more students participating in existing programs. Improvements or enlargements to athletic facilities can also cause an increase in the numbers of participants. Whatever the reason, a larger numbers of athletes using the athletic training room is a viable point to include in your rationale for improvements to the facility.

Another argument for increasing the size of the athletic training room is the advancement in rehabilitation techniques. The emphasis on functional strength training and rehabilitation has created a need for additional space to implement these activities. The use of foam rollers, Swiss exercise balls and plyometric techniques all require additional square footage in order to perform these exercises safely.

It is important to consider the usage of the athletic training room during the school day. Does the room serve as a classroom or laboratory for an introductory sports medicine class? In some communities the athletic training room may serve as a Red Cross Triage Center during natural disasters. Multiple uses of the athletic training room can be an important reason to justify its expansion.

Privacy and security are excellent points to consider when requesting additional or separate office space. Administrators can quickly see the importance of privacy and security when it comes to records, in particular medical records, of minors. It is also important to have an area of privacy to discuss health issues with the athletes and their parents. A separate office space may also provide

additional privacy for some injury evaluations.

When considering improvement and expansion of the athletic training room, thought should be given to including a separate space for hydrotherapy modalities. This will allow for easier supervision of the "wet area" and may also reduce the risk of slips and falls due to wet floors. The electrical supply to these wet areas must include the use of Ground Fault Interrupt (GFI) circuits. Water supply, including the type of mixing valve, and adequate drainage are also important items in the hydrotherapy area.

### **Know the process**

The entire improvement process will probably go quicker and smoother if you are familiar with school system procedures for allocating funds for building projects. While requests for additional space and equipment must follow a specific chain of command, it is helpful to know when the best time is to make these requests. If the improvements are considered "big money" items, it may be necessary to tie them into a building project within the school system. These projects do not need to be at the specific building where the athletic training room is located. Funds for athletic training room improvements can be added onto building or renovation projects for any building in the school system. You should work closely with the athletic director and principal to coordinate requests for improvements at the most appropriate time. This will increase the probability that the requests will be approved.

It's vital to ensure that all requests are included in the proposal. Last minute additions or changes may negatively affect the success of the request. Justifications for your requests must be substantiated. All supporting data should accompany the request.

Aim high and be prepared to prioritize the items you are seeking in case the funding is not adequate for your entire request. You cannot do this alone. Consult with other ATC's in your region. Work in unison with your direct supervisors and the financial officer in your school corporation. This will be the best way to ensure success in your efforts to improve your athletic training facility.

# Chapter Nine

## Increasing Your Athletic Training Staff

There is probably not a certified athletic trainer alive working at the secondary school level that has not wondered what life would be like if s/he had additional help. Having inadequate time to care for all athletes in the program due to the constraints of a full schedule is one of the most frustrating things that a secondary school ATC has to deal with.

As ATCs continue within the profession, their personal lives change and take on new challenges, teams are added at the schools, enrollment increases and administrators, coaches and parents are continually more demanding. When there is only one ATC at a particular school, a strain is placed on the conscientious ATC because s/he cannot be everywhere at once. For instance, although coverage policies may dictate that the ATC be at the soccer game, that does not make it any easier to explain to the parent, athlete or coach why the athletic trainer was not in the gym when a serious injury occurred during a basketball game.

ATCs are increasingly called on to do many things for many different people. This takes a toll on their personal well-being, not to mention the well-being of the athletes and each individual team. Adding either another full-time or a part-time ATC to the athletic training staff will pay great dividends -not only to the existing ATC, but also to the athletes and athletic program in general.

### **Evaluate the current athletic training program**

There are several important things to take into account before the process of requesting additional help is begun. First, evaluate your own job performance and school situation. If an ATC has consistently received lackluster end-of-year evaluations, then the request for additional staff is likely to fall on deaf ears. Likewise if school district that is going through a financial crisis with cutbacks in teachers, paraprofessional staff and/or administrators, then creating an additional position is also unlikely. If the ATC can honestly say that s/he has received good evaluations and that his/her standing within the school community is good, coupled with a sound financial basis for the school district, then the ATC should proceed with the request.

Long before any proposal is written, it is important to have several aspects of this request done. The ATC should keep track of the number of hours spent per week in the athletic training room by week, by season, by semester and by year. If the ATC goes to the administrator and says that s/he has been working too many hours and would like some additional staffing help, but is unable to account for the number of hours spent on the athletic training aspect of the job, then the request is not likely to go very far.

It is also important to amass other accurate records before beginning any request for additional staff. Accurate treatment records are of the utmost importance when preparing a proposal. These treatment records need to be detailed so important data can be extrapolated if necessary. Records should include the sport that the athlete participates in as well as the type of treatment received. To go along with this, it is essential that initial injury reports include proper documentation. Administrators do not want to know just that the ATC dealt with injuries - that is the athletic trainer's job. They want to know that the ATC dealt with a specific number of injuries and that s/he performed a specific number of treatments.

When preparing for a proposal, determine which sports and seasons are the busiest in the athletic training room and which sports and seasons require the greatest time commitment. If possible, determine the number of sporting events that go uncovered due to overlapping events. Sometimes it is more important to know what the ATC is not able to do rather than what s/he is able to do.

The ATC should also have an idea of how much time is spent daily doing things such as injury evaluation, developing rehabilitation programs, administration and organization. Administration and organization would include such things as telephone calls to parents, physicians, or insurance companies; putting treatments into a computer program; filing paperwork; or taking care of any general athletic training room issues.

Having an up-to-date inventory and staying under budget are also very beneficial when it comes time to ask for additional help. If the ATC is unable to stay under the allotted budget or has no idea how many and what type of supplies s/he has, or both, then s/he is facing an uphill battle before even starting.

Other important things to determine are the ratio of male to female athletes and how many are seen in the athletic training room. Other statistics that will be important to determine are the ratio of athletes to coaches (for each gender and sport) and ratios of principals to students, counselors to students and teachers to students.

Sports are continually being added at most schools across the country. If another sport is not being added, then it seems like the number of participants in the existing sports is increasing. Many athletic teams have a "no cut" policy, which means that team rosters are on the rise. As team rosters increase, coaches could add additional contests to ensure that all athletes in the program get adequate competition time. With increased contests come increased time spent at the school by the ATC. Once again, it is important for the ATC to document the number of contests and the number of participants that these contests involve.

Other aspects of a job situation that need to be evaluated are the presence of Saturday practices, other campus home events and travel within the district that is required to fulfill the job description. If Saturday practices are held, what is the ATC's coverage policy? For off-campus home events, how much travel is required? At these same events, are there suitable unisex facilities in case an opposite gender athlete needs an examination?

*What are the advantages to the athletes if there were more than one ATC?*

Consider how employing another ATC would benefit the district. While additional staff may help to alleviate the workload on the preexisting athletic trainer, it should by no means be the main reason for requesting the position. Faster access to medical care should be stressed as well as improved rehabilitative potential of the student athletes. It only stands to reason that with more staff, the student athletes will have more attention devoted to them. This is especially important during the early stages of an injury or postoperatively.

Another advantage of additional staff could be that the athletic training student aide program would benefit. This would give students an additional point of view to learn from as they increase their knowledge base.

With another ATC on staff, preseason and postseason conditioning programs for all sports can be better monitored. These same programs could then be consulted as the individual sport coaching staff requests it. Lower-level programs (sub-varsity or possibly junior high) would benefit from more

staff as well. Depending on the situation, this could mean better care and coverage of contests. It could also mean more quality time spent with these students during their athletic times.

Although an ATC cannot specifically seek to hire a colleague of the opposite gender for an additional staff position, it would be optimal if such a situation occurred. There are some types of injuries that need to be evaluated by a same-gender ATC to obtain the best examination. While having an ATC of each gender is not always possible, it is something else that could be emphasized during the preliminary phases of this process.

It should be determined whether, because of outside factors such as training room location or individual program, both genders of athletes are given equal access to the ATC and the athletic training room. If additional staffing could alleviate some of these issues, this would also be a very beneficial aspect to bring up in a proposal or conversation with appropriate administrators.

#### *Improved Standard of Care*

Other things that should be considered are times when a standard of care could not be maintained because of the constraints of having one ATC provide care to an entire athletic program. This can be something as simple as a time when a major injury occurred at one competition or practice site and the ATC was at another. A few good examples should be given if possible. It is important to note that while there may be numerous examples of this, not all should be given; provide only a few of the major ones. When giving these examples, showing that additional staffing would alleviate this problem in the future would be beneficial.

#### *Determine Full-Time or Part-Time Position*

Finally, before attempting to begin the process of adding additional staff, the options of full-time versus part-time should be considered. If full-time is thought to be best the option, then teaching should be evaluated as well as non-teaching. If it is desirable to hire a teacher/ATC, what positions, if any, are or will be available at the school? If the position is to be part-time, where will that individual come from? (S/he could also be a teacher.) Can nearby hospitals or clinics help provide staffing? If so, what type of coverage will this ATC be able to provide and at what cost?

Once the ATC has a clear idea in his/her head about how to approach this issue, it's time to initiate the process. It cannot be stressed enough how important it is to go through proper channels when seeking to add additional staffing. If an ATC does not use the chain of command and skips an important person, s/he runs the risk of having that person shoot down the proposal because a key decision maker has been left out of the loop. If the ATC's immediate supervisor is the athletic director or campus coordinator, a preliminary meeting should be scheduled to discuss the additional staffing request. During that meeting, all of the information that s/he has previously gathered should be outlined to the immediate supervisor. Every attempt should be made to keep this meeting as friendly as possible. If the meeting becomes adversarial or several questions remain, the meeting should be stopped until it can be restarted with a fresh outlook and additional information.

Either before or immediately after the initial meeting, the ATC should put down a proposal on paper that will be submitted for any subsequent meetings with additional supervisors. A copy should be made available for each supervisor who is met with so that each can listen to the presentation and then be able to read the proposal to digest the information that is being given to him/her. The ATC will have to judge the individual situation as to how in depth or basic the proposal needs to be. Once again, it is important to include sufficient information that the proposal is taken seriously but not so much information that the people who will be making a decision on its merits become bogged down in detail and minutia.

Assuming that the initial meeting goes well and the immediate supervisor is in agreement that additional staffing would benefit the athletic department, the ATC or supervisor should contact the next person up the line. Depending on the school district, that person could range from the building principal to the superintendent of schools. ATCs should remember that it is important to make every attempt to be as professional as possible to all people that they meet with to discuss this request. The ATC is not only selling the idea to his/her supervisors but also him/herself and program. If the ATC gives off the perception that s/he is unprofessional with dress, speech, etc., then that will reflect negatively on the program and the proposal, which could eventually doom the request to failure.

If all district supervisory personnel are in favor of this proposal, the proposal will more than likely need to be heard by the board of education for the school district. Prior to the meeting, each board member should have a written copy of the proposal that has been prepared. The ATC should be prepared to attend the board meeting where the proposal will be discussed and voted on, so any question that is unanswered by the written proposal can be addressed by the ATC. It is also very professional to show up at the meeting even if no opportunity will be given for a question-and-answer time. Attendance could go a long way to help sway the vote of any board member that may not have his/her mind already made up as to how to vote on this.

### *Patience!*

One last thing that the ATC needs to understand is that this process is not likely to be very fast. School districts generally do not conduct business quickly. The time from the initial meeting with the immediate supervisor until ultimate approval of a proposal is given could range anywhere from a week to a year. It is very important that the ATC be very patient during this entire process. Any attempt to speed up the approval process may backfire on the ATC and the proposal will ultimately fail.

### **Outline of the Process**

1. Evaluate the current athletic training program.
2. Keep track of the daily hours spent performing athletic training duties.
  - Per week
  - Per month
  - Per season
3. Determine the number of treatments and evaluations performed daily.
4. Determine what sports and seasons are the busiest.
  - Most injuries
  - Most treatments
  - Most practices
  - Most contests
  - Most hours
5. Determine percentage of time performing these duties each day:
  - Evaluation of injuries
  - Rehabilitation
  - Administration and organization
  - Telephone calls to parents and physicians
  - Record keeping
  - Inventory

- Budget
6. Determine (by gender) the number of athletes seen.
  7. Determine the ratio of athletes to coaches by:
    - Sport
    - Season
    - Gender
  8. Determine the ratio of athletes to ATC by the above criteria.
  9. Determine the number of sports, teams and athletes added since the ATC was hired.
  10. Determine the number of practices and home contests not covered by the ATC.
    - "Off-campus" home contests
    - Saturday practices
  11. Present provisions for continued care in the absence of ATC due to illness, professional leave, or family concerns.
  12. Provide a cost analysis of athletic training services currently provided.
  13. What are the advantages to the athletes if there were more than one ATC?
    - Faster access to medical care
    - One ATC in the athletic training room, one on the practice/game field
    - Improved rehabilitation and treatment of athletic injuries due to dispersal of workload
    - Additional parent, coach and athlete educational programs
    - Improved preseason conditioning programs implemented by ATCs
    - Improved coverage of practices and contests
    - Coverage of lower-level practices/games
  14. Recognize gender concerns.
  15. Having ATCs of both genders may increase comfort level of athletes.
    - Improved "standard of care"
  16. Determine if all sports have equal access to ATC and athletic training program.
  17. Give examples of when "standard of care" could not be maintained.
    - How would additional staffing alleviate that concern?
  18. Determine whether a full-time or part-time position is needed.
    - Advantages versus disadvantages
    - Budgetary constraints
  19. Are teaching positions available?

## **Discussion**

The points listed above will help determine the strategies and rationales used in the proposal for additional athletic training staff. Most school boards, superintendents and administrators balk at the

notion of adding staff, especially in the financial crunch that most school districts face. They are trying to get the best possible learning environment for the student, with minimal cost to the taxpayers. The lone ATC must be persuasive with facts and figures organized in a concise manner. The ideal of "standard of care" will peak the interest of the most inattentive administrator. If the ATC can demonstrate that the "standard of care" is not equally available to all sports or genders because of unavoidable constraints placed on the ATC, this argument may go a long way in obtaining additional athletic training staff.

If a particular secondary school has seen many ATCs come and go, then the argument of excessive hours and workload can be addressed. By spreading the load, professional burnout may be avoided and greater continuity of care, which is better for the student athlete, will be achieved.

## Chapter

# Ten

## Improving Communication

Communication is a critical aspect of any athletic training program. A successful ATC maintains open lines of communication with athletes, parents, administrators, coaches, the team physician and all those who are a part of the school's health care network. Athletic trainers must work constantly as public relations agents for themselves and for their programs. Verbal communication such as telephone calls to parents, consultations with physicians and meetings with administrators should take place on a regular basis. Short presentations to booster clubs or at parent meetings offer an excellent chance to highlight the benefits of having an athletic trainer at the school and to educate the public about the profession of athletic training. This also gives ATCs an opportunity to promote their own programs.

Equally important to oral communication is written communication in the form of letters, guidelines, manuals, procedures, etc. One key document every ATC should generate is a "Position Description." A sample can be found in Appendix C.

In addition to this, the ATC should have comprehensive written policies and procedures specific to the individual school. This document should be kept on hand in the athletic training room, as well as on file with the school's administration. A letter that includes an abbreviated version of the job description and athletic training room policies can be sent to parents. This letter can be designed to educate parents about athletic training and the care their child will receive. It should also include pertinent information the parents may need such as the school telephone number, athletic training room telephone number, procedures for reporting injuries, school insurance information and the athletic training room's hours of operation. Such a letter can serve as an excellent introduction to your program.

The minimal forms of communication every ATC should use are a written job description, a policy manual and an introductory letter to parents. In addition to these, it is suggested that ATCs generate forms to bolster communication with athletes, parents, coaches, physicians and athletic training student aides. Suggested documents include:

- Communication with athletes
- Basic injury treatment plan (see Appendix)
- Basic rehabilitation plan
- Warning signs for head injury and basic care (see Appendix)
- Athletic training room rules
- Athletic training room hours of operation

Communication with parents is especially vital after an injury or illness occurs. Do not assume or expect the student to inform the parent of the injury at all, let alone correctly. The best way to communicate with parents is through personal contact. It has been said that a physician's best defense against a lawsuit is his/her bedside manner. The more personable and open to communication with parents you are, the happier they will be with you.

The above listed documents are helpful to encourage communication between the ATC and those directly involved in the athlete's well being. Two additional methods of communication and public

relations that can be used to reach a large audience are newsletters and Web sites. Most schools have a newsletter that is sent out to parents. Early in the school year, the ATC can use this document as a tool to introduce his/her program. Include a definition of athletic training, a brief job description and a mission statement as a way to educate the readers. Some ATCs design and send out their own newsletter that is specific to their program. This type of communication is also an excellent project in which athletic training student aides and college interns can participate.

Likewise, most schools offer Internet Web sites as a means to reach parents and other interested parties. Submitting photographs, kudos to athletic training student aides and articles dealing with athletic training is a cost-effective and far-reaching method to promote your program. A Web site designed by the ATC and staff can be even more specialized and can create positive public relations while educating the public about your program and the profession of athletic training. This Web site can also be linked with the school or district Web site. Again, athletic training student aides and interns can be involved in the design and updating of the Web site.

As mentioned earlier, presenting at booster club and parent meetings is an excellent way to introduce yourself and your program to parents. When presenting to parent groups, begin by introducing yourself and your staff members. Include in your introduction the certified ATC staff members' educational backgrounds, the requirements for BOC certification, an explanation of continuing education units and information about state licensure (if applicable). A brief mention of the American Pediatric Association's statement (Lyznicki 1999) would be a something else to include. This will work to help assure parents that you are indeed a qualified allied health professional who must keep abreast of changes and improvements in the profession. Give a brief description of what athletic training is and what your job description entails. Also discuss the athletic training room rules and procedures that are pertinent to the group you are addressing. Include in your presentation the role of athletic training student aides and college interns and highlight their accomplishments. Introduce your team physician, whether present or not. If possible, make the presentation professional by using audiovisual aids such as PowerPoint or slides. Include a handout that addresses the school's information and athletic training room information. Attach your business card and business cards of your certified staff members and team physician. Be prepared - this may be the first impression the parents will have of you, the ATC, and it should be a positive one.

It is also recommended that ATCs develop a line of communication with other athletic trainers in their area, as well as statewide. Inform ATCs from neighboring schools about what to expect when they arrive on your campus. Will the ATC be present? Will water and injury ice be provided? Will a physician or ambulance be present? Will athletic training student aides help transport coolers and supplies to the sidelines? This type of information can be shared via e-mail or telephone calls and helps alleviate problems and confusion before they arise.

Finally, nonverbal communication, in the form of professionalism, often has a greater impact than any other type of communication. Although athletic trainers are rarely in the limelight, they are highly visible and therefore constantly in a position to be watched or noticed by many people. Professional dress and mannerisms speak volumes about an individual. Even those who have no knowledge of athletic training recognize professionalism. Appearance, not only that of the ATC but of the staff and students as well, is crucial to building a respectable and credible reputation in the community. Through their body language and speech, ATCs should be perceived as caring, competent and approachable. The manner in which an ATC deals with the public, athletes, coaches, parents, administrators and other health care professionals greatly affects the amount of success s/he will enjoy.

Effective communication skills are critical to effective athletic training. Open communication not only helps to build a rapport with all involved but can also be crucial to the prevention of problems. ATCs should constantly look for opportunities to develop their professional image by using all avenues of communication.

The following list comprises documents or methods you may use to communicate with various audiences associated with your school. This list is by no means comprehensive. Creativity and imagination should be used when dealing with communication issues.

#### *Communication with parents*

Sports screening forms  
Emergency treatment authorization forms  
County/district injury insurance information  
Procedures for reporting an injury

#### *Post-injury return to play authorization*

Basic injury treatment plan (see Appendix)  
Warning signs for head injury and basic care (see Appendix)  
Introductory letter (see Appendix)  
Newsletter  
Web site

#### *Communication with athletes*

Procedures for reporting an injury

#### *Post-injury return to play guidelines*

Basic injury treatment plan (see Appendix)  
Warning signs for head injury and basic care (see Appendix)  
Introductory letter (see Appendix)  
Newsletter  
Web site  
Athletic training room rules and procedures  
Athletic training room hours of operation  
Return to play policy  
Treatment/rehabilitation plan  
Television/computer monitor in athletic training room with continuous PowerPoint slide show highlighting:

- Rules
- Daily schedule
- Injury/illness prevention strategies

#### *Injury/illness treatment protocol and tips*

#### *Communication with coaches*

Daily injury reports  
Individual status reports  
Athletic training room rules and procedures  
Athletic training room hours of operation  
Rules/protocols for visiting schools that do not have an ATC  
Newsletter

*Communication with physicians*

Operational protocols (see Appendix)

Injury report

*Return to play*

Treatment/rehabilitation plan

Newsletter

Web site

In the words of a very successful high school ATC, "The telephone is my most important modality." Communication to parents, coaches, teachers, administrators, treating physicians, etc. will provide the best path to overall success as a high school ATC.

# Chapter Eleven

## Improving Time Management

Good time management is an important component of any job, but in the athletic training profession it's critical. Before going to your supervisor with concerns or ideas for change, you should evaluate your daily school-related tasks, making honest observations of how your time is currently being spent. This will help when you approach your supervisor, as well as in your day-to-day role as a secondary school ATC.

To determine your current time management skills, ask yourself:

- What do your supervisors/principals see you doing most often?
- What is the condition of your office? Is it organized or disorganized? Are there little yellow sticky notes and reports all over the place?
- Do you have a planner or some form of time management system?
- Do you forget to do things that should be done without a reminder from your supervisor?

Your supervisor sees a great deal of what you do. If all s/he sees from you laziness, disorganization or other troublesome characteristics, then the first thing that needs to be changed is you. Do not let a behavior that can easily be modified be the reason that your request fails. If your supervisor sees you working on things that you have identified as challenges, s/he will be more willing to help come up with solutions.

### Time Management

A successful bid to change employment status or work conditions hinges on the ATC's ability to justify his/her requests. Many times, these requests are based on how well the ATC provides care and coverage to all sports and activities required by the site. Many people are naturally good at managing or budgeting their time; others must work hard to learn this skill.

### Different Systems and Tools

There are a number of time management books and programs/systems that can help improve organizational skills and abilities. Before investing in a specific method, it's important to educate yourself on the system(s) you are considering.

Remember - just buying a book or system will not make you a better time manager. You must believe in what you are doing and you must do it consistently for several months so that it becomes habit. If you do not, then you are wasting money and, more importantly, time. Do not adopt a system on the suggestion of a friend without investigating a number of things, primarily cost. While many systems provide excellent tools and resources, they can also be expensive.

### Caveat Emptor

Just because you are more efficient and have found more time does not mean that someone else can fill it for you! "No one," Eleanor Roosevelt said, "can make you feel inferior without your consent. Never give it." This concept applies in time management as well. Many times those who create positive change in their lives through time management find that they just take on more responsibilities. Don't fall into that trap. Once you have created that extra time, make sure that you protect it. That is what you worked so hard to secure. No one can force you to do extra work without your con-

sent; be wary when you give it.

### **Record Your Activities**

Good time management can provide an incredible amount of ammunition for any request. When developing a proposal, it is imperative that the ATC know exactly how much time is spent on every work-related task each day. Many ATCs say that there just is not enough time to do what they need to do each day. Saying that is fine, but you also should be able to prove it. Most employers pay you for at least eight hours every day. To make any changes, you have to show them that they are asking for 10, 12 or even 14 hours' worth of work (see Time Budget Analysis).

The first exercise in time management is to do research that can prove how much time you are spending on your responsibilities each day. For a period of days or, even better, weeks, write down what you are doing every 10 minutes throughout the day. The idea is not to change what you are doing, but to track it. This helps you see where your time has been spent. The chart on the following page is provided to give you an idea of what to track and how to do it.

In addition, you should track your activities over the period of all seasons you are working. For instance, time spent will be different between the fall, winter, spring and summer seasons based on sport requirements. Ensure that you know what your time expenses are for each season.

### **Working in Reverse**

One of the *7 Habits of Highly Successful People* (Covey 1989) is to "Begin with the end in mind." Rarely do those who begin a journey to a particular place do so without using a road map to help them get there. But the map does them no good without a destination.

Identify your goal or destination, then make sure that everything you do is aimed at reaching that goal. Look at all routes available as you plan your course and identify the most effective path for you to take to achieve your goals.

## Time Budget Analysis

Time	Activity	Domain of AT*
Ex. 3:00pm	Taping, Wrapping, Pre-Practice/Event TX.	P, T

\*Legend, R - Rehabilitation, P - Prevention, A - Administration, E - Education/Counseling,  
T - Recognition, Evaluation and Immediate Care of Athletic Injuries.

# Chapter Twelve

## Improving the Policies and Procedures in your Athletic Training Program

Written policies and procedures are essential to the success of any organization. They serve as the "road map" for the organization and those who work within it. With appropriate written policies and procedures, the ATC is helping to assure accountability for him/herself and for the program while also protecting him/herself and the program from accusations of improper professional conduct, treatments or procedures.

Without written policies and procedures, ATCs and employers expose themselves to enormous legal liability and difficulty in defending themselves against accusations of improper professional conduct, medical treatments or procedures.

Finally, it is recommended that policy and procedure documents should always be considered as guidelines for the professional ATC in the secondary school setting, not as protocols. Referring to the document as a guideline allows the ATC to customize the document to fit the need of his/her specific program (in instances of a school district with one or more schools employing ATCs). Protocols tend to be more restrictive in nature and may be construed in a different way legally.

### **Suggested/recommended contents of the policy and procedure guideline document**

#### *Statement of purpose for the document*

Why is this document necessary? What are the primary reasons for the document's existence? For whom is the document intended?

#### *Regulations governing the practice of athletic training in your state*

Does your state have an athletic trainer practice act? If so, a copy of the practice act should be included in your policy and procedure guidelines to demonstrate that the ATC and his/her employer(s) are aware of the existence of the law and that the ATC is practicing under that law.

#### *Athletic trainer job descriptions*

Every ATC employed by a school system or a contracted provider should have a written job description. This job description should be included in the policy and procedure guideline document. Also job descriptions for assistant ATCs, volunteer assistants, student-interns and high school athletic training student aides should be included here.

Also included in this portion of the document should be any specific job requirements not previously outlined as part of your state's practice act. These can be things such as 1) possessing a teaching credential; 2) possessing current CPR/first aid certification; and 3) possessing other credentials as required by your employer(s).

#### *Professional performance evaluation procedures and sample evaluation instrument*

This section of the document should outline how ATCs will be evaluated. Included should be information on how often evaluations will occur; when the evaluations will occur; who will do the evaluations; what is considered to be a "passing" evaluation; what is considered to be a "failing" evaluation; what actions will be taken when an ATC does not receive a favorable evaluation; and what recourse the ATC has for disputing his/her evaluation and/or correcting the deficiencies.

A sample copy of the evaluation instrument should be included in the policy and procedure guideline document as an appendix at the end of the document or within this section of the document. A sample evaluation document is included in the Appendix.

#### *Team physician roles, responsibilities, standing orders, documents*

Outlined in this section of the document should be information pertaining to the roles and responsibilities of your team physician(s). What is the team physician responsible for specifically? What is the role of the team physician in caring for and treating your student-athletes?

Any written standing orders should also be included in this section of the document as an appendix at the end of the document. These orders should be signed and dated by the physician and include the name(s) of the ATC(s) who are covered by the orders.

Any documents that are used to exchange information between the physician and the ATC should also be outlined in this section. These may include referral forms, report forms, rehabilitation forms, etc. Examples of these forms can be included in this section of the document or as appendices at the end of the document.

#### *Athletic event and practice coverage policies and guidelines*

This section of the document should include information on what athletic events and practices will be covered by the ATC(s) and when. It should also include brief explanations of why certain sports will receive coverage by the ATC over other sports.

It is important to note that these policies and guidelines should be able to be supported with appropriate documentation. For example, the ATC can justify covering football practice instead of tennis practice because injury statistics show that there is a much higher risk of injury in football than there is in tennis. This fact would need to be clearly explained when outlining coverage policies and procedures in the document.

Also included should be information regarding coverage policies for regularly scheduled school holidays, tournaments, etc.

#### *Training room policies, procedures and guidelines*

This section of the document should include the specific policies, procedures and guidelines for the athletic training room. What are the training room rules? What are the training room hours? What procedures will be followed when an injured athlete comes to the training room?

#### *Guidelines and policies regarding the use of medications*

What are the guidelines for the distribution and use of medications by the ATC in your school district? Are ATCs allowed to keep and to distribute over-the-counter medications to student-athletes in the school? If so, what procedures must be followed? What type of documentation or permission form is required for the ATC to give medication to a student-athlete? How will medication be distributed and by whom? How will medications be secured? How will the distribution of medications be documented? What medications will the ATC be allowed to distribute? All of these questions should be answered in this section of the policy and procedure guideline document.

#### *Emergency guidelines and procedures for injured/ill athletes*

This section of the document should provide specific information for how injured/ill athletes will be cared for by the ATC. Also included in this section should be an overview of the various responsibilities of all parties involved in the emergency plan for the organization. Specifically, who will be in

charge of activating EMS; meeting EMS personnel at the scene; contacting parents; accompanying the student to the hospital/physician; contacting school district administrative personnel, etc.

It may be advisable to include a copy of the school's emergency plan in the policy and procedure guideline document. The emergency plan should include information pertaining to the following:

- Ambulance coverage for athletic contests (which ones, what times?)
- Methods for activating the local EMS system in the absence of an ambulance
- Role and responsibilities of team physicians, athletic trainers and coaches in an emergency
- Procedures for notifying parents/guardians and/or family members of injured student/staff
- Procedures for notifying appropriate school administrative personnel
- A method of "debriefing" for all personnel involved in the emergency
- Transportation guidelines and procedures for injured/ill athletes. How student-athletes who do not have serious injuries/illnesses that require emergency care are to be transported to physicians, the hospital emergency department, etc.

The various methods of transportation should be outlined in order of priority with the student's parent/guardian being the first choice. After the parents, the choices may include transportation by the ATC, a member of the coaching staff, another parent or responsible adult, etc. Transportation methods will also be determined by local policy regarding this issue.

*Policy guidelines regarding preparticipation physicals, return to play criteria and disqualifications*  
This section of the document should specifically outline what the regulations are regarding preparticipation physicals. It should include information about your state high school activity association/league's rules regarding preparticipation physicals, including dates that the physical is valid, who is recognized by the state association to conduct the physical examination, etc.

If your local school district rules differ in any way from state regulations, these rules should also be specifically outlined in this section of your document. For example, perhaps your school district requires that physical exams may only be conducted by a physician, while the state association/league allows for other medical providers such as chiropractors, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, etc. to conduct preparticipation physical examinations.

Guidelines for return to play should also be included in this section of your document. Included in this information should be who has the authority to make return to play decisions, along with who has the ultimate authority in such situations - the athletic trainer, team physician, family physician, etc.

Disqualification criteria should also be contained in this section of your guidelines. What conditions warrant disqualification from participation in athletics? How will disqualifications be determined? What criteria will be used? What recourse does the student-athlete and his/her parents have to appeal a disqualification?

#### *Documentation and record-keeping procedures*

This portion of the document should outline the various types of documentation that the ATC will be required to keep as part of his/her responsibilities as the athletic trainer for the school. These documents may include individual athlete records such as physical forms, injury reports, insurance information and documents, physician reports, referral records, etc. The document should also outline how these records will be stored and secured per local, state and federal regulations regarding patient privacy. This may also include such things as a daily treatment log, inventory logs, coaches'

reports, medication logs, copies of invoices and/or purchase orders for equipment and documentation of maintenance on modalities and other equipment in the athletic training room.

It is also advisable to include in this section the procedures that should be followed by the ATC, coaching staff and school staff in the event of catastrophic injury or death of an athlete. How will evidence of the injury be preserved? Who will secure this evidence? What kind of evidence possession chain will be established? How will the incident be documented and reported and to whom?

A method for regular reporting to supervisory personnel should also be included in the document. This reporting process may be done on a weekly, monthly or yearly basis and should outline what activities have occurred in the athletic training room over the previous time period. Reports may include a summary of injuries seen, treatment totals, number of athlete visits to the athletic training room, cost analysis, etc. Also included in this section will be who the report is distributed and made available to.

#### *Weather and lightning policies and guidelines*

This section should include specific procedures that should be followed in the event of severe weather or lightning. It should also outline what are considered to be safe and unsafe shelters in the event of severe weather. Also, the procedures for reporting or dealing with coaches or other staff members who fail to follow the policy guidelines should be included here.

This portion of the document should also address severe heat and severe cold issues as well. It may be helpful to include a chart or recommendations for when athletes should either take precautions or not be allowed to participate at all because of these weather extremes.

#### *Injury management policies/procedures*

In some situations, ATCs may be required to outline specific treatment procedures or protocols for the injuries/illnesses that athletes may report to the athletic trainer. These procedures and protocols should be specifically outlined in this section of the document.

#### *Policy/procedure guidelines for the use of therapeutic modalities*

Outlined in this section of the document should be the policies and procedures that are to be followed for the use of therapeutic modalities in the athletic training room. This includes information on what therapeutic modalities are available, what their general purpose is, who is qualified to use them (and how s/he is qualified or became qualified), what documentation (if any) is required to provide a therapeutic modality to an athlete (such as a prescription from a physician) and what the indications and contraindications are for use of these modalities.

#### *Budget and inventory guidelines and purchasing procedures*

What procedures are to be followed by the ATC for keeping an accurate inventory of training room equipment and supplies? When will this documentation take place and to whom is the information submitted, if anyone?

What procedures are to be followed for purchasing athletic training room equipment and supplies? The exact, step-by-step procedures should be outlined here. In many cases, these procedures will already be outlined under normal school district purchasing policies.

#### *Policies and guidelines for blood borne pathogens and infectious diseases*

It is extremely important in these days and times that a clear policy is established as to how blood borne pathogens and infectious diseases will be dealt with by the ATC and athletic training staff.

This section should contain specific information on who is allowed to deal with blood borne pathogens and who is not; what training individuals must have to be qualified to deal with blood-borne pathogens; who will be required to obtain vaccinations against blood borne pathogens and how s/he will obtain those vaccinations; the specific procedure(s) that is to be followed when dealing with blood or other body fluids; and the procedures for dealing with and reporting an accidental exposure to blood or body fluids.

*What you should and should not do*

The following are some simple guidelines that the ATC should adhere to when developing his/her policy and procedure document:

1. Generalize all policies and guidelines and avoid specifics whenever possible. This will allow "wiggle room" for individual ATCs in a school district who may have different circumstances in each individual school.

2. Be sure to have the document reviewed by all individuals who will be affected before it is finalized and approved for use. For example, if your school district employs multiple athletic trainers, ALL of them should be in agreement over the document if it is to be followed by everyone in the district.

Note: If this is the case, it is highly recommended that each ATC follow the same general document and that separate documents not be used because of the danger of these documents being used against one another in legal proceedings.

3. The document should be reviewed and approved by your school principal, athletic director and team physician before it becomes final.

4. The document should be reviewed and approved by your school district's legal staff to be sure there is nothing in the document that could leave the ATC or the school district open to liability or legal claim.

5. The document should be reviewed and approved by your school district administration and/or the district board of education.

6. Regularly review and update policies and guidelines to reflect changes in professional standards and expectations.

## Chapter

# Thirteen

## Recruiting and Maintaining Quality Team Physicians

One of the most important things any ATC can do is establish a good relationship with his/her supervising physician. For secondary school athletic trainers, the value of a quality team physician cannot be underestimated. These relationships are not a given - they must be cultivated and nurtured from the beginning of an ATC's tenure with the doctor. Maintaining a good relationship and two-way communication with the team physician is a simple way to enhance your athletic training position.

### What is a Team Physician?

The team physician is responsible for treating and coordinating the medical care of all athletic team members (*Team Physician Consensus Statement - AOASM, 2000*). S/he must have an unrestricted medical license (MD or DO) as well as:

- A fundamental knowledge of emergency care regarding sporting events
- CPR/first aid certification
- A working knowledge of trauma, musculoskeletal injuries and other medical conditions affecting the adolescent athlete

### Types of Physicians

There are a variety of medical specialties that may qualify a doctor to be an athletic team physician. Types of physicians (and their positive and negative aspects from a team physician standpoint) include:

#### *Orthopedic Surgeons*

- Having an orthopedist on the sidelines of a game is considered by many to be the gold standard for team physician care.
- Orthopedic injuries can be diagnosed immediately and referred if necessary.
- A drawback is that if a non-orthopedic problem occurs, the physician may not be comfortable dealing with it.
- The availability of high-quality orthopedic surgeons for high school team physician coverage may be limited.

#### *Family Physicians*

- The value of a family physician varies greatly, depending on his/her experience.
- His/her orthopedic background must be strong.
- S/he should have an athletic background to temper what could potentially be an ultraconservative approach to sports injuries.

#### *Osteopaths*

- An osteopathic physician with a sound background in sports medicine is a good option for a team physician.
- An osteopath has an orthopedic background as well as skills in muscle energy and manipulation.
- Appropriately trained, s/he is a very good cross between an orthopedist and a family physician.

### Maintaining Relationships

Once a secondary school ATC establishes a rapport with his/her physician, it's necessary to take

steps to maintain and enhance that relationship. If the physician does not feel appreciated or welcomed, s/he may not continue to volunteer time with your program. Here are some recommendations to maintain the relationships built with your team physicians:

- Ensure s/he is properly orientated to the duties/expectations of the job
- Introduce him/her to your key staff and athletes
- Offer encouragement often
- Show respect at all times
- Keep it interesting
- Make him/her feel like part of the team

Most team physicians do not participate in your program for the money - they do it because they like the kids and want to feel like they are a part of the team or school. Enhance that feeling by including him/her in uniform purchases for the athletic training program. Collared shirts or jackets with the school logo can be much more valuable than any stipend that they would receive.

Recognize the physician in front of peers and the public. Many doctors don't publicize the fact that they also volunteer time as team physicians. They do, however, take pride in their association with the school. Cultivate that by inviting your team physician to banquets and recognizing his/her efforts at every opportunity. If s/he is unable to attend, make the acknowledgement anyway - word will get back to your physician, who will be quite appreciative.

Be organized and communicate. Always communicate with the physician about dates, times and locations of games or events that they are expected to attend. Give him/her a game schedule (along with directions, if applicable) as soon as it is available. Offer to carpool or give them a ride if it is possible. Also, make sure your physician can get into your games. Create passes for all home games and if possible, away games (similar to the staff or student passes used at the school). This will identify the physician and provide him/her with VIP access to your contests. If possible, designate a reserved parking spot in a desirable location. This will allow him/her to park close and not get tied up before the beginning of a game.

### **Evaluating and Removing Team Physicians**

This is an aspect of athletic training that is never easy. How can one fire someone who is volunteering his/her time and may have done so for many years? This question is difficult to answer, but if your physician is not meeting your expectations, it can make you look bad and jeopardize the perceptions of the entire program.

First, the expectations of the team physician must be available, approved by the school administration and acknowledged by the team physician. The athletic director or principal should be included in a meeting to communicate your expectations. A common source of friction or problems with the physician is arrival and departure times from games. Make sure the physician is clear on your expectations here because games may not be able to start if the physician is not present.

The ATC must also understand the expectations the physician may have of the school and the athletic training program. Are athletes able to be seen on a walk-in basis or are there only certain times they may be seen? Is there a fee associated with evaluation or treatment? If so, is it consistent or does it depend on the athlete's insurance? Will the physician cover athletes' x-ray needs? It is very helpful to have these issues discussed, ironed out and, if possible, written down so there is no confusion between parties. This is a great way to avoid unnecessary friction or frustration.

If your team physician is not meeting the expectations and you feel a change is necessary, then **MAKE THE CHANGE!** Don't put yourself in a position where your team physician makes you and

your program look bad. There are many good physicians who would enjoy being a part of your program.

To let a physician go, try following these steps:

- 1) Gather your evidence. These decisions should not be made on a whim. Document the things that you are not satisfied with and keep them on file.
- 2) Make sure the documentation is factual and not perceptual. Dealing with facts makes difficult decisions much easier to face.
- 3) Make sure your administration is on board with your decision. Their support may be crucial.
- 4) Meet with the physician to discuss the problems you are having. Give him/her an opportunity to change or adjust things to more clearly reflect your expectations.
- 5) If changes are not made or the physician is not willing to compromise, then it may be necessary to go your separate ways. Avoid confrontation if at all possible. A letter thanking him/her for his/her time and energy but stating that you "wish to go in another direction" is appropriate.

Remember, your team physician has probably received as much from the association with your school as you have from him/her. Don't feel like s/he is "owed" anything for their time volunteered if things are not the way you need them to be. These are business decisions and should be treated as such. They may be difficult at first, but in the long run you and your program will be better for it.

# Appendix

## A

# Sample Proposal for Change in the Athletic Training Program

Example used is full-time teaching to reduced teaching load.

### Statement of the Problem

There are many advantages of providing an athletic program in the high school setting. Yet, with participation in athletics, there comes an inherent risk of injury. The attached injury reports and treatment records support this. Providing comprehensive health care to high school is multi-dimensional as supported in the National Athletic Trainers' Association's *Consensus Statement on Appropriate Medical Care for Secondary School-Aged Athletes*\* (see attached). While serving in the two positions - teaching \_\_\_\_\_ and serving as the athletic trainer - has been rewarding and challenging, the time commitment of an average of \_\_\_\_ hours per week required to perform both duties is exhausting. In addition, the time available to provide athletic health care is insufficient to fulfill the obligations recommended through my education as an ATC, as well as the *Consensus Statement*.

\_\_\_\_\_ School District is a strong proponent of students and student health and recognizes that the health and welfare of student-athletes is an essential component of the athletic program. Therefore, in an effort to improve the current level of athletic health care our student athletes are provided, an extensive fact finding project has been completed.

### Proposed Solution

Reducing the teaching load (insert your request here) will change the weekly average from \_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_, thus providing a more reasonable schedule for career-oriented professionals. It will also provide the opportunity for the ATC to provide a more comprehensive delivery of injury prevention, immediate emergency care, injury evaluation, rehabilitation/reconditioning and record keeping.

### Estimated Costs

Salary	\$ _____ (includes benefits)
Stipend for extra hours	\$ _____
Expendable supplies	\$ _____
Capital equipment	\$ _____
Facility renovation/remodel	\$ _____
Total cost to high school	\$ _____

\* Available at [www.nata.org](http://www.nata.org)

# Appendix

# B

## Sample Position Description: Athletic Trainer

### General Statement of Duties

The position of athletic trainer is a full school year position. The duties of the athletic trainer include, but are not limited to, prevention of athletic injuries; recognition, evaluation and immediate care of athletic injuries; rehabilitation and reconditioning of athletic injuries; professional development and responsibility; and health care administration as specified in the *Domains of the NATA Certified Athletic Trainer*. The athletic trainer serves as a liaison between physicians, coaches, athletes and parents. The athletic trainer ensures that players participate only when physically able and that any physician instructions are understood and followed. The athletic trainer will coordinate with the activities/athletic director to ensure that the athletic training room and all required events will be covered.

### Position Requirements

1. The athletic trainer must be certified by the Board of Certification (BOC) and maintain the standards established by the National Athletic Trainers' Association's (NATA) role delineation study.
2. The athletic trainer must be a member in good standing with NATA, his/her local NATA district and the state athletic trainers' association.

### Specific Duties

In cooperation with the principal and the activities/athletics director, the certified athletic trainer should:

1. Develop plans for providing athletic trainer coverage at all interscholastic athletic events identified in *Athletic Training Program Coverage Policy*.
2. Establish daily hours of operation for the athletic training room.
3. Develop a comprehensive emergency plan for his/her specific facilities.
4. Initiate and administer an athletic training student aide program in accordance with the school's clubs and activities guidelines.
5. Establish a working relationship with a designated team physician and community physicians.
6. Complete (school system's) *Bloodborne Pathogens Exposure Control Plan* training and comply with the regulations therein.
7. Maintain high-quality medical records on all injuries and rehabilitation procedures.
8. Comply with any and all policies regarding health care delivery as indicated by the (school system) regulations and outlined in the *Athletic Training Program Policies and Procedures Manual*.

## Sample Position Description: Athletic Trainer/Educator

### **Certified Athletic Trainer (ATC) Job Responsibilities**

The ATC will provide coverage for home contests on a schedule cooperatively determined by athletic trainer and athletic director, as well as cover most varsity contests, non-varsity contests in football and varsity football away-games. Varsity and selected non-varsity contests will be covered based on the risk of the sports and the availability of the athletic trainer during a particular sport season.

Practice coverage will be determined by athletic trainer and athletic director and will typically include daily coverage of varsity and non-varsity sports. This coverage will be based on injury risk of the sport and other mutually agreed on factors.

The ATC will cover selected postseason contests as determined by the athletic trainer and athletic director.

The ATC will provide for the prevention of athletic injuries through the application of protective taping, wraps and braces and assist in the design of practices to help to reduce the incidence of injury.

The ATC will advise coaches of flexibility, strengthening and conditioning programs to help prevent injuries and optimize performance.

The ATC will provide immediate care of athletic injuries and refer the athlete to medical facilities when necessary.

The ATC will design and supervise rehabilitation programs for athletic injuries under the direction of a referring physician.

Medical histories and correspondence will also be kept on file in the athletic training room. The athletic trainer will maintain accurate medical records for injuries, treatment, rehabilitation and physician referrals.

The ATC will be responsible for budgeting, ordering and inventorying athletic training supplies.

The ATC will supervise athletic training student aides.

The ATC will counsel and advise athletes on health related issues, including nutrition and substance abuse.

The ATC will conduct sports medicine workshops for the district's coaches. These workshops will include information on injury prevention, basic first aid and CPR, injury recognition and treatment and injury rehabilitation. In addition s/he will provide specific information on blood borne pathogens, HIV/AIDS, the district's sports medicine protocols and other health-related topics.

The ATC may serve as a consultant to the middle school athletic program by advising middle school athletes in the athletic training room on an appointment basis.

The ATC may advise and assist with equipment purchases and fittings.

The ATC maintains open channels of communication with coaches, parents and physicians regarding athletic injuries, treatment and rehabilitation.

The ATC may market the athletic training program within the school district and the medical community through newsletters, brochures, media contacts, etc.

The ATC is responsible to the athletic director and is supervised by the consulting physicians.

The ATC/educator should be given release time in consideration for the additional hours worked in providing sports medical care to athletes and supervising athletic training student aides after regular school hours.

# Appendix

## C

# Athletic Trainer Evaluation Samples

### Completing the Evaluation Form

1. The evaluation form contains 31 items, each scored on a scale of 1 to 5.
2. If an item is not observed at your facility, circle Not Observed (N/O). Not observed will not penalize the athletic trainer, but do not make extensive use of this category.
3. Please justify the use of 1 and 5 in scoring an athletic trainer's competency on any item. (Do not routinely use 5; this should be for only exceptional competency by the athletic trainer.)
4. When scoring the evaluation, use the following as indicators of the athletic trainer's performance:

(1) POOR	(Performs adequately 0% to 20% of the time)
(2) NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	(Performs adequately 21% to 50% of the time)
(3) AVERAGE	(Performs adequately 51% to 80% of the time)
(4) GOOD	(Performs adequately 81% to 90% of the time)
(5) EXCELLENT	(Performs adequately 91% to 100% of the time)
(N/O) NOT OBSERVED	
5. The performance will be evaluated by:
  - Principal, his/her designee and/or athletic director;
  - One varsity head coach for fall, winter and spring sport seasons as designated by the athletic director; and
  - Self.
6. Maximum possible score is 155, which is expected only of athletic trainers exceptional in every area. Normal competence in every area is 124. Minimal overall passing score is 108 when all items are scored. N/O will be factored in on the evaluation to balance out the score.

## Head Athletic Trainer Evaluation Form

Athletic Trainer: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_  
Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluation scale: Circle the appropriate number from the scale for each of the following items listed.

- (1) POOR
- (2) NEEDS IMPROVEMENT
- (3) AVERAGE
- (4) GOOD
- (5) EXCELLENT
- (N/O) NOT OBSERVED

### **I. PERSONAL / PROFESSIONAL ATTRIBUTES:**

- |  |               |
|--|---------------|
| 1. Communicates with coaches and parents to facilitate the overall effectiveness of the athletic program.  | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 2. Appropriately utilizes feedback and constructive criticism from supervisors, coaches and parents.   | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 3. Continually strives to grow and develop professionally.   | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 4. Manages personal and professional issues so they do not interfere with performance of duties.   | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 5. Adheres to the policies and procedures of the facility.   | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 6. Demonstrates dependability and promptness in carrying out assignments.  | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 7. Shows initiative in performing duties.  | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 8. Demonstrates good work habits and work ethic.   | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 9. Effectively utilizes human resources for the most effective health care coverage of the athletic program. (Covers practices and games in a prioritized manner.) | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 10. Reports to work on time and stays until completion of the practice or event..  | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 11. Maintains appropriate professional appearance.   | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 12. Establishes, promotes and supervises an athletic training student aide program and promotes a positive atmosphere for student assistants.                      | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 13. Communicates with supervisors and subordinates in a professional manner.   | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 14. Places the well-being of the athlete above winning and does not sacrifice principles to win.   | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 15. Exhibits sportsmanship in dealing with officials, coaches and visiting teams.  | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |

16. Maintains appropriate relationships with athletes. 1 2 3 4 5 N/O

17. Appropriately supports the coaching staff and athletic program within the school and community. 1 2 3 4 5 N/O

**Total Score for this section =** \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS:

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**II. ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROCEDURAL ABILITIES:**

1. Maintains accurate written records as appropriate and required. 1 2 3 4 5 N/O

2. Maintains equipment, supplies and treatment areas in good order. 1 2 3 4 5 N/O

3. Adheres to budget policy, works within budget constraints and effectively uses monies budgeted for supplies and equipment. 1 2 3 4 5 N/O

4. Assists coaches in enforcement of team rules in an equitable and consistent manner. 1 2 3 4 5 N/O

5. Maintains control and discipline of student athletes in the athletic training facility. 1 2 3 4 5 N/O

**Total Score for this section =** \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS:

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**III. ATHLETIC TRAINING SKILLS AND ABILITIES**

1. Exhibits reasonable and prudent conduct in preventing and treating athletic injuries. 1 2 3 4 5 N/O

2. Demonstrates the ability to assess injuries and refer if needed to the appropriate medical personnel. 1 2 3 4 5 N/O

3. Follows the advice of physicians and medical consultants regarding participation of injured athletes. 1 2 3 4 5 N/O

4. Demonstrates the ability to establish and adjust a treatment program for injured athletes. 1 2 3 4 5 N/O

5. Recognizes potential injury situations and intervenes appropriately. 1 2 3 4 5 N/O

6. Has the confidence of the coaching staff when assessing athletic injuries, planning treatment and handling emergency situations. 1 2 3 4 5 N/O

7. Establishes and implements appropriate training room procedures. 1 2 3 4 5 N/O

8. Maintains a clean and sanitary training room. 1 2 3 4 5 N/O

9. Demonstrates competence in the clinical domains of athletic training, which include prevention, assessment, treatment and rehabilitation of athletic injuries. 1 2 3 4 5 N/O

**Total Score for this section =** \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS:

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**Total Score for all sections =** \_\_\_\_\_

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

---

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RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS:

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Signature of Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date evaluation completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator Title: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Athletic Trainer Evaluation - Assistant Athletic Trainer**

### Completing the Evaluation Form

1. The evaluation form contains 29 items, each scored on a scale of 1 to 5.
2. If an item is not observed at your facility circle Not Observed (N/O). Not observed will not penalize the athletic trainer, but do not make extensive use of this category.
3. Please justify the use of 1 and 5 in scoring an athletic trainer's competency on any item. (Do not routinely use 5, this should be for only exceptional competency by the athletic trainer.)
4. When scoring the evaluation, use the following as indicators of the athletic trainer's performance:

(1) POOR	(Performs adequately 0% to 20% of the time)
(2) NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	(Performs adequately 21% to 50% of the time)
(3) AVERAGE	(Performs adequately 51% to 80% of the time)
(4) GOOD	(Performs adequately 81% to 90% of the time)
(5) EXCELLENT	(Performs adequately 91% to 100% of the time)
(N/O) NOT OBSERVED	
5. The performance will be evaluated by:
  - Principal, his/her designee and/or athletic director;
  - One varsity head coach for fall, winter and spring sport seasons as designated by the athletic director; and
  - Self.
6. Maximum possible score is 145, which is expected only of athletic trainers exceptional in every area. Normal competence in every area is 124. Minimal overall passing score is 108 when all items are scored. N/O will be factored in on the evaluation to balance out the score.

## Assistant Athletic Trainer Evaluation Form

Athletic Trainer: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_  
Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluation scale: Circle the appropriate number from the scale for each of the following items listed.

- (1) POOR
- (2) NEEDS IMPROVEMENT
- (3) AVERAGE
- (4) GOOD
- (5) EXCELLENT
- (N/O) NOT OBSERVED

### **I. PERSONAL / PROFESSIONAL ATTRIBUTES:**

- |   |               |
|---|---------------|
| 1. Appropriately utilizes feedback and constructive criticism from supervisors, coaches and parents.  | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 2. Continually strives to grow and develop professionally.  | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 3. Manages personal and professional issues so they do not interfere with performance of duties.  | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 4. Adheres to the policies and procedures of the facility.  | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 5. Demonstrates dependability and promptness in carrying out assignments.   | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 6. Shows initiative in performing duties.   | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 7. Demonstrates good work habits and work ethic.  | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 8. Reports to work on time and stays until completion of the practice or event.   | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 9. Maintains appropriate professional appearance.   | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 10. Establishes, promotes and supervises an athletic training student aide program and promotes a positive atmosphere for student assistants. | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 11. Communicates with supervisors and subordinates in a professional manner.  | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 12. Places the well-being of the athlete above winning and does not sacrifice principles to win.  | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 13. Exhibits sportsmanship in dealing with officials, coaches and visiting teams.   | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 14. Maintains appropriate relationships with athletes.  | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 15. Appropriately supports the coaching staff and athletic program within the school and community.   | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |

**Total Score for this section =** \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS:

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**II. ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROCEDURAL ABILITIES:**

- |   |               |
|---|---------------|
| 1. Maintains accurate written records as appropriate and required.  | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 2. Maintains equipment, supplies and treatment areas in good order.   | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 3. Adheres to budget policy, works within budget constraints and effectively uses monies budgeted for supplies and equipment. | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 4. Assists coaches in enforcement of team rules in an equitable and consistent manner.  | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 5. Maintains control and discipline of student athletes in the athletic training facility.                                    | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |

**Total Score for this section =** \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS:

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**III. ATHLETIC TRAINING SKILLS AND ABILITIES**

- |   |               |
|---|---------------|
| 1. Exhibits reasonable and prudent conduct in preventing and treating athletic injuries.  | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 2. Demonstrates the ability to assess injuries and refer if needed to the appropriate medical personnel.                            | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 3. Follows the advice of physicians and medical consultants regarding participation of injured athletes.                            | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 4. Demonstrates the ability to establish and adjust a treatment program for injured athletes.                                       | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 5. Recognizes potential injury situations and intervenes appropriately.   | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 6. Has the confidence of the coaching staff when assessing athletic injuries, planning treatment and handling emergency situations. | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 7. Establishes and implements appropriate training room procedures.   | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |
| 8. Maintains a clean and sanitary training room.  | 1 2 3 4 5 N/O |

9. Demonstrates competence in the clinical domains of athletic training, which includes prevention, assessment, treatment and rehabilitation of athletic injuries.

1 2 3 4 5 N/O

**Total Score for this section =**

\_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Total Score for all sections =**

\_\_\_\_\_

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date evaluation completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator Title: \_\_\_\_\_

# ***Appendix***

# **D**

## **Sample Communications**

### **Athletic Training Room Rules**

THESE ARE RULES YOU MUST ABIDE BY IN ORDER TO RECEIVE TREATMENT AND BE ALLOWED IN THE ATHLETIC TRAINING ROOM.

No cleats, candy, gum, food or drinks.

No socializing or "hanging out."

You must sign in each time you come in for treatment.

The only reasons an athlete should be in the athletic training room are: 1) to receive treatment for an injury, or 2) to turn in paperwork.

Athletes are NOT allowed to use the athletic training room restroom or telephone.

No PROFANITY or other inappropriate language is allowed. IF YOU CHOOSE TO USE PROFANITY, YOU WILL BE ASKED TO LEAVE IMMEDIATELY!!!

Come to treatment every day until released by the athletic trainer.

If you do not come to treatment you will not be taped.

If you do not come to treatment you will not be excused from practice.

Inform the head athletic trainer of your injury as soon as possible after it occurs.

Ankles must be shaved before you will be taped.

If you seek medical attention for an injury you must bring a written doctor's release before you will be allowed to return to participation.

Be on time or you will not receive treatment.

Be courteous and respectful to anyone who helps you.

Be respectful to each other.

Be respectful to coaches and athletic trainers.

## Criteria for Lettering in Athletic Training

In order to earn a varsity letter as an athletic training student aide, the student must:

- Participate as a full-time student trainer (10 hrs/week minimum) during two seasons of the year (seasons defined as fall sports, winter sports or spring sports).
- Participate as a full-time student trainer during preseason football (Aug. to first game) and/or spring football (May 1 to spring jamboree).
- Cover practices for the team to which you are assigned. Traveling is optional, but encouraged.
- Participate in the daily duties involved in training room upkeep, cleaning and record keeping.
- Participate in all fund-raising activities.
- Return all athletic training equipment or clothing. (T-shirts are \$10 each if ruined or not returned.)
- Perform all duties to the satisfaction of the head and assistant athletic trainers.

Please tear off lower portion, sign and return to \_\_\_\_\_.

---

By signing this, I acknowledge that I have read the above rules and the football procedures and that I agree to abide by them for the \_\_\_\_\_ school year.

---

Athletic training student aide's signature

---

Date

---

Parent's signature

---

Date

## Head Injury Care

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Your child \_\_\_\_\_ reported a head injury to the athletic trainer at \_\_\_\_\_ High School. S/he was evaluated by the athletic trainer and no significant loss of neurological function or level of consciousness was found. The purpose of this letter is to inform you of your child's injury so that you can monitor him/her until a full recovery is made. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me.

### **Care of Head Injury**

- Your child should be watched carefully at home for the next 12-24 hours.
- Athlete should avoid strenuous physical activities for at least 24 hours after injury.
- Apply an ice bag to your child's area of swelling intermittently for 24 hours.
- For headache, use a non-aspirin medication as long as your child has no allergies or ill-effects when taking it.
- Unless otherwise instructed, the child should be awakened every 2-3 hours over the next 24 hours and asked simple questions.
- Student should report to the athletic trainer the next school day.

Please be aware that head injury symptoms can occur days, weeks or even months after the original injury. If you notice any changes in behavior or an increase or onset of symptoms, please seek medical attention.

### **IF YOUR CHILD EXPERIENCES ANY OF THE FOLLOWING CALL YOUR PHYSICIAN OR TAKE YOUR CHILD TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM IMMEDIATELY!**

- Increasing drowsiness, mental confusion or difficulty waking.
- Persistent vomiting, neck stiffness, nausea or fever.
- Difficulty keeping balance, weakness of the face, arms or legs.
- Blurred or double vision.
- Persistent or severe headaches despite medication.
- Seizures.
- Any other new or worsening symptoms that concern you.

\_\_\_ Your son/daughter will need a doctor's release before s/he will be allowed to return to participation in sports.

\_\_\_ Your son/daughter will not need a doctor's release before s/he will be allowed to return to participation in sports.

Sue Doe, ATC  
Head Athletic Trainer  
555-555-5555 x555

## **Immediate Injury Care**

The following treatment is recommended for soft tissue injuries including, sprains, muscle strains and contusions (bruises):

Rest - Stay off or do not use the area for 1-2 days.

Ice - 20" directly to the injured area. Repeat every hour.

Compression - Wrap the area with an ACE wrap, loosening as you near the heart.

Elevation - Elevate the area above the heart to reduce swelling.

- Avoid heat. Heat will increase swelling, thereby increasing pain.
- Unless you have sensitivity to cold, it is okay to apply the ice directly to the skin.
- Begin simple range-of-motion exercises after icing.
- Seek medical attention if symptoms worsen.
- If you seek medical attention, notify the athletic trainer.
- If you seek medical attention, a written release from the doctor must be presented to the athletic trainer before you can return to participation.

# ***Appendix***

# **E**

## **Sample Policies and Procedures**

### **Sample Policies and Procedures**

*Table of Contents*  
*Statement of Purpose*

*Section I - Regulations Governing the Certified Athletic Trainer*

NATA Regulations  
State Regulations  
CPR Certification  
Other Certifications

*Section II - Athletic Trainer Job Descriptions*

Head Athletic Trainer  
Assistant Athletic Trainer  
Adult Sports Medicine Assistant (Non-certified)  
College Practicum/Intern Student Athletic Trainer (NATA Certified or Non-certified)  
Athletic Training Student Aides

*Section III - Athletic Trainer Evaluation*

Evaluation Procedure (Head Athletic Trainer)  
Evaluation Procedure (Assistant Athletic Trainer)  
Evaluation Instrument for Head Athletic Trainers  
Evaluation Instrument for Assistant Athletic Trainers

*Section IV - Team Physicians*

Roles and Responsibilities  
Standing Orders  
Team Physician Standing Orders Form (Appendix B)

*Section V - Coverage of Athletic Contests and Practices*

Varsity football  
Junior Varsity and/or B-team football  
Other home contest coverage  
Practice coverage  
Coverage of athletic events during scheduled school holidays

*Section VI - Training Room Policies, Procedures and Facilities*

Training Room Rules  
Training Room Facility Guidelines  
Return to Play Guidelines  
Examination of Opposite Sex Student Athletes  
Over-the-Counter Medications  
Inhalers

## Emergency Insect Sting Bite Kits

### *Section VII - Emergency Procedures and Transportation Policy for Injured Athletes*

The Emergency Plan

Basic Emergency Equipment

Transporting the Ill or Injured Athlete

### *Section VIII - Documentation and Record Keeping*

Student Athlete Records

Training Room Records

Regular Reporting

### *Section IX - Weather and Lightning Guidelines*

Severe Weather and Lightning Guidelines

Severe Heat Guidelines

Heat Index

Severe Cold Guidelines

## **Policies and Procedures - What to Include**

### *Statement of Purpose*

The purpose of this document is to provide general guidelines, with minimum standards, for certified athletic trainers employed by the school district. Each certified athletic trainer is encouraged to work with his/her principal, athletic director, team physician(s), coaching staff and other appropriate personnel to establish additional guidelines for their particular school.

This document does NOT replace any previous written procedures pertaining to certified athletic trainers in the school district. Rather it is intended to serve as an updated version of earlier manuals. Earlier procedure manuals should be kept on file and used as supplements to these guidelines.

### *Section I - Regulations Governing the Certified Athletic Trainer*

List the various regulations for practicing as an athletic trainer in your state.

### *Section II - Athletic Trainer Job Descriptions*

Specific job descriptions for any of the following that may work in your program should be included in the document:

- Head athletic trainer
- Assistant athletic trainer
- Adult sports medicine assistant (non-certified)
- College practicum/intern student athletic trainer (BOC certified or non-certified)
- Athletic training student aides

### *Section III - Athletic Trainer Evaluation*

What will the evaluation procedure be for each of the following:

- Head athletic trainer
- Assistant athletic trainer
- College practicum/intern student athletic trainer
- Athletic training student aides

#### *Section IV - Team Physicians*

Roles and responsibilities

Standing orders, include copy of any forms you may use

#### *Section V - Coverage of Athletic Contests and Practices*

Outlined in the section should be what contests and practices you are or will be responsible for covering during the school year, during vacation periods, etc.

#### *Section VI - Training Room Policies, Procedures and Facilities*

Included in this section should be information pertaining to the following:

- Training room rules
- Training room facility guidelines
- Return to play guidelines
- Examination of opposite sex student athletes
- Use of over-the-counter medications
- Use of prescribed inhalers
- Use of prescribed emergency insect sting bite kits

#### *Section VII - Emergency Procedures and Transportation Policy for Injured Athletes*

This section should include:

- The Emergency Plan
- A listing of basic emergency equipment that the ATC should have available to him/her at the school
- Detailed instructions on policies concerning the transport of ill or injured athletes

#### *Section VIII - Documentation and Record Keeping*

Included here should be detailed information procedures for establishing and maintaining:

- Student athlete records
- Training room records
- Methods for reporting training room activities

#### *Section IX - Weather and Lightning Guidelines*

This portion of the document should contain information on policies and procedures pertaining to:

- Severe weather and lightning
- Severe heat
- Including the heat index
- Severe cold guidelines
- Including the wind chill index

# Appendix

# F

## Sample Proposals for Additional Staff

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number/ratio</b>
Total student enrollment	_____
Total number of athletes (includes those athletes involved in more than one sport)	_____
Number of male athletes (includes those athletes involved in more than one sport)	_____
Number of female athletes (includes those athletes involved in more than one sport)	_____
Number of sports	_____
Number of teams	_____
Number of contests	_____
Number of home contests	_____
Number of principals	_____
Number of athletic directors (including assistant ADs)	_____
Number of coaches	_____
Number of certified athletic trainers	_____
Ratio of principals to students	_____
Ratio of athletic directors to athletes	_____
Ratio of coaches to athletes	_____
Ratio of certified athletic trainers to athletes	_____
Sports added since ATC hired or A.T. program instituted	_____
Teams/levels added since ATC hired or A.T. program instituted	_____
Home contests added since ATC hired or A.T. program instituted	_____
Coaches added since ATC hired or A.T. program instituted	_____

*Example of cost analysis work table*

The figures for this table would be gathered from athletic training room records and the cost of these services if the athlete went outside the school setting to obtain them. The costs of these services are determined by averaging the fees charged by local clinics.

<b>Service Provided</b>	<b>Total number</b>	<b>Average cost</b>	<b>Total cost</b>
Initial Evaluation	800	125.00	100,000.00
Treatment (30 min.)	900	75.00	675,000.00
Treatment (60 min.)	3000	150.00	450,000.00
Treatment (60+ min.)	1500	200.00	300,000.00
<b>Total cost of services</b>			<b>1,525,000.00</b>

## Sample proposal for employment of an additional athletic trainer

The employment of an additional athletic trainer by the \_\_\_\_\_ School District has been previously discussed with members of the athletic department staff. At the request of the athletic director, background information was compiled and other districts were contacted in order to assess the feasibility of employing an additional athletic trainer in the \_\_\_\_\_ School District.

It is my/our opinion that in this district the students and the community would greatly benefit from the employment of an additional athletic trainer. It is time for \_\_\_\_\_ School District to be proactive and hire a second athletic trainer for the district.

Therefore, I/we respectfully propose the hiring of an additional athletic trainer by \_\_\_\_\_ district.

### **Why should we employ an additional athletic trainer?**

#### *1. Improved delivery of health care services*

Our district goal of maximizing student participation in all extracurricular activities has increased the demand for athletic health care services. The number of athletes to be evaluated, treated and taped has risen substantially, while staff and time allotment per period have remained constant. Demands for services during peak times are exceeding the capabilities of one professional.

Today's health care environment has resulted in shorter hospital stays and reduced access to adjunctive service, including private physical therapy. Injured student athletes are now being remanded to my care at an earlier stage of recovery - in most cases 24 hours postoperatively - necessitating the one on one interaction that is required for such a person to have adequate recovery. While this occurs, other areas in the athletic trainers' job description do not receive adequate attention.

Most sports have evolved to increase physical demands on athletes, increasing both the frequency and severity of injury and resulting in an increased caseload for the athletic trainer. Sport seasons have expanded with overlap, necessitating additional hours for the athletic trainer and often events are uncovered.

#### *2. Junior high athletics virtually ignored*

Other than partial coverage of junior high football games and also partial coverage of the boys' athletic period, the student athlete population at the junior high school is uncovered by an athletic trainer.

In the past two years there have been an equal number of knee injuries of the nature that would require surgical intervention in junior high athletics as in the high school.

There are no statistics for numbers, type or severity of injuries at the junior high school due to lack record keeping, but if I had to guess the number of injuries at that level are at a similar rate as the high school.

#### *3. Better risk management*

Simultaneous events (junior high football/volleyball, softball/baseball/track) make adequate health care coverage impossible. Currently, when I am not immediately present, the coaches or a student

athletic trainer (minors) must make health care decisions.

During peak times and when multiple events are scheduled, it has become increasingly difficult to meet documentation and diligence demands imposed by our contemporary legal climate.

#### *4. Gender issues and co-educational concerns*

The employment of an additional athletic trainer will reduce the risks associated with the treatment and examination of athletes of the opposite sex.

There are times when athletes do not feel comfortable sharing medical problems with an athletic trainer of the opposite sex.

If a men's athletic function is taking place simultaneously with a women's athletic function (i.e. football and volleyball) , the men's event is given priority based on injury potential leaving our female athletes uncovered for several events.

The educational requirements for athletic training student aides has increased substantially. I have sought to have an athletic training class added to the high school curriculum for the past three years but have been unsuccessful due to the lack of interest from the other students in the school. Daily event coverage and treatment demands have made educating these students very difficult. Preparations for practices, event coverage, tutorial sessions and injury management create an unending flow of interruptions, seriously undermining the ability to give instruction during athletic periods.

Most colleges now require prospective student trainers to complete formal preparation in sports medicine for consideration to their programs. Additional staff would enhance the instructional capability.

#### *5. Better utilization of health care personnel*

Expanded numbers of teams, participants and games, along with an overlapping season, have resulted in a tremendous demand on the district athletic trainer.

Include sports, teams, participants and contest totals (From Tables 1 and 2).

**Table 1. High School**

<b>Sport</b>	<b><u>Number of teams</u></b>	<b><u>Number of participants</u></b>	<b><u>Number of contests</u></b>
Football	3	110	30+
Volleyball	4	45	80+
Cross country-Boys	2	20	10
Cross country-Girl	1	10	10
Basketball-Boys	3	45-50	80
Basketball-Girls	3	45-50	80
Golf-Boys	2	15-20	14
Golf-Girls	1	8	8
Tennis	2	30-40	15
Track-Boys	3	50	20+
Track-Girls	2	20	15+
Baseball	3	50-60	70+
Softball	2	30	45
Drill team	1	20-40	All year
Cheerleaders	2	30	All year
Band and flag corp	1	100	Marching season
AT Student Aides	1	7	All contests
<i>Totals</i>	36	635-690**	477+*

\*These coverage numbers reflect the total number of contests in these sports. They will vary from year to year based of depth of playoff participation, weather, etc. The athletic trainer is at most home contests barring conflicting events. I also cover junior high football and home junior high track meets.

\*\*These numbers reflect the number of participants in each sport. Some of these athletes participate in multiple sports.

The average sport has between 30 and 70 practices during the course of the season. All sports have preseason and post season practice every day during one of the three athletic periods.

**Table 2. Junior High School**

<b>Sport</b>	<b><u>Number of teams</u></b>	<b><u>Number of participants</u></b>	<b><u>Number of contests</u></b>
Football	4	100	32
Volleyball	5	65-70	80+
Basketball-Girls	4	50	70+
Basketball-Boys	6	85	80+
Tennis	4	50-60	6
Track-Boys	2	50	6
Track-Girls	2	20	6
Cheerleaders	1	16	All Year
Band and twirlers	1	60	All Year
<i>Total</i>	29	496-511**	280+

Presently the only junior high athletic events that are covered are the A team football home games and any track meet held at bulldog stadium. I am also available at the junior high for the first 20 minutes of boys' athletic period.

\*\*These numbers reflect the number of participants in each sport. Some of these athletes participate in multiple sports.

## Athletic Trainer Time Commitment

### **Average Hours Per Week, Per Athletic Season**

The following does not include any travel to and from any playoff games.

#### August through November

*Football, Volleyball, Cross Country, Jr. High Football, all other sports off-season*

Monday 7 a.m. - 7 p.m.  
Tuesday 7 a.m. - 9:30 p.m. (volleyball/jr. high football)  
Wednesday 7 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.  
Thursday 7 a.m. - 10 p.m. (sub-varsity football)  
Friday 7 a.m. - Midnight (varsity football)  
Saturday 8 a.m. - 11 a.m. (morning treatments)

\*All day for volleyball tournament

**Average 68 hours per week**

#### November through February

*Boys and girls basketball, after-school track, off-season for all other sports*

Monday 7 a.m. - 6 p.m.  
Tuesday 7 a.m. - 10 p.m. (basketball game)  
Wednesday 7 a.m. - 6 p.m.  
Thursday 7 a.m. - 6 p.m.  
Friday 7 a.m. - 10 p.m. (basketball game)

**Average 63 hours per week**

#### February through May

*Baseball, softball, track, tennis, golf, all other sports off-season*

Monday 7 a.m. - 8 p.m. (freshman baseball)  
Tuesday 7 a.m. - 9:30 p.m. (baseball or softball)  
Wednesday 7 a.m. - 6 p.m.  
Thursday 7 a.m. - 6 p.m. (later if baseball or softball tournament)  
Friday 7 a.m. - 9:30 p.m. (baseball or softball)

**Average 64 hours per week, up to 75 to 80 if there is a tournament**

#### June and July

Usually at school a couple of days per week preparing for upcoming season by storing new supplies, inputting physicals, etc.

Open weight room in evening one week during coaching school.

## Student Staff Ratios

### *Sample*

Number of Students enrolled at \_\_\_\_\_ High School 720

Number of Athletes at \_\_\_\_\_ High School 690  
(This number includes athletes participating in more than one sport)

Number of Male athletes at \_\_\_\_\_ High School 381  
(This number includes those athletes participating in more than one sport)

Number of Female athletes at \_\_\_\_\_ High School 309  
(This number includes those athletes participating in more than one sport)

Principals at \_\_\_\_\_ High School 3

Counselors at \_\_\_\_\_ High School 3

Teachers at \_\_\_\_\_ High School 55

Coaches at \_\_\_\_\_ High School (Males 11 - Females 8) 19

Athletic trainers at \_\_\_\_\_ High School 1

Student/principal ratio 236/1

Student/counselor ratio 236/1

Student/teacher ratio 13/1

Male athlete/male coach ratio 20/1

Female athlete/female coach ratio 17/1

All athletes/athletic trainer ratio 690/1  
(Athletes counted for multiple sports)

All Athletes/Athletic Trainer ratio 354/1  
(Athletes counted only one time)

### **Economic Impact of athletic trainer on our community and school district**

Since the beginning of high school football practice in the fall of 1998, the \_\_\_\_\_ High School's athletic training room has done close to 1,000 treatments. These treatments are administered before school, during tutorials, during athletic periods, during lunch, after school, after practice and on Saturdays. If these treatments were administered by independent providers at an average cost of \$75.00 per treatment (a VERY conservative figure), it would cost the taxpayers and insurance companies approximately \$75,000. There is no way of knowing how much money is saved in visits to physicians that were avoided due to the presence of the athletic trainer. The average trip to a medical doctor's office is easily \$350.

## Duties of the Athletic Trainer at School District

### **Qualifications:**

- Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university
- Valid teachers certificate
- Licensed as an Athletic Trainer by the State Board of (insert applicable board or entity here)
- National Athletic Trainer's Association Board of Certification (BOC) certified

**Reports to:** Director of athletics, high school principal, superintendent

### **Performance Responsibilities:**

The athletic trainer's responsibilities are varied. These responsibilities are not confined to first aid and rehabilitation alone. They ramify into a number of areas in which s/he has specific duties, including the following:

- Be present at all varsity and sub-varsity high school athletic contests on or around campus.
- Be present at junior high football games after high school football practice has completed.
- Advise senior and junior high school coaching staffs in the conditioning of their athletes.
- Evaluate and care for injured athletes. Communicate with parents, physicians, or hospitals as indicated.
- Implement the following, in cooperation with team physician(s), district personnel and local health care providers:
  - Management of acute injury or illness to athlete
  - Rehabilitation procedures
  - Operation of therapeutic devices and equipment
  - Application of braces, guards, tape and other devices
  - Referrals to physicians, health services and hospitals
  - Documentation of athletic training services
  - Coordination of annual athletic physicals
- Supervise athletic training room operations, including requisition and storage of supplies and equipment, maintaining an inventory and preparing an annual budget.
- Supervise and instruct student trainers
- Counsel athletes and coaches on matters pertaining to promotion of healthful lifestyles.
- Assist in the completion of athletic injury insurance claims.
- Maintain appropriate medical records on all athletes.
- Maintain continuing professional education.
- Serve as a liaison to the community on athletic health care matters.
- Perform other duties not specifically stated herein but essential to the total team concept of athletic health care.

# Appendix

## G

## Bibliography & Suggested Reading

### Works cited

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### To learn more

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