

YOU AND THE LAW

Athletic Trainers Why Should Every High School Have One?

Thomas H. Sawyer, Ed.D. and Tonya L. Sawyer, Ph.D.

Introduction

Athletic trainers play a vital role in ensuring the health and safety of student-athletes in high school sports programs. Every high school should have access to athletic trainers either as full-time staff members or as a part-time contracted service. This is necessary for all contact (impact) sports, such as basketball, field hockey, football, gymnastics, ice hockey, lacrosse, rugby, and soccer. All of those sports mentioned have concussion issues. Liability issues in sports focus on impact injuries, specifically concussions, due to the high costs involved in these injuries.

According to the National Athletic Trainers Association (NATA) (<https://www.nata.org>) and the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) (<https://www.acsm.org>), the following are some of the reasons why every high school should have an athletic trainer:

Thomas H. Sawyer, Ed.D., Emeritus Professor, Kinesiology, Recreation and Sport, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, IN; Tonya L. Sawyer, Ph.D., Chair, Department of Business and Leadership, Assistant Professor of Sport Management, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, Saint Mary of the Woods, IN.

1. **Injury prevention:** Athletic trainers are trained to assess and identify potential injury risks. They can develop and implement injury prevention programs, such as warm-up routines and proper conditioning exercises, to reduce the likelihood of injuries during sports activities.
2. **Immediate response to injuries:** In the event of an injury, athletic trainers are on the sidelines to provide immediate care. They can assess the severity of an injury, administer first aid, and make informed decisions about whether further medical attention is required.
3. **Injury management and rehabilitation:** Athletic trainers are skilled in evaluating and managing various sports injuries. They can provide initial treatment, develop rehabilitation programs, and work with athletes to facilitate their safe and timely return to sports activities.
4. **Concussion management:** Concussions are a significant concern in sports. Athletic trainers are trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of concussions. They can implement proper protocols for evaluation, management, and return-to-play decisions per current concussion guidelines.
5. **Health and wellness education:** Athletic trainers educate student-athletes on topics such as nutrition, hydration, injury prevention, and proper training techniques. By promoting healthy habits and injury prevention strategies, they contribute to the overall well-being of student-athletes.
6. **Collaborative approach:** Athletic trainers work closely with coaches, parents, and healthcare professionals to ensure comprehensive care for student-athletes. They can communicate with medical providers, coordinate appointments, and assist in the implementation of individualized care plans.
7. **Emergency preparedness:** Athletic trainers are trained in emergency response and can effectively manage potentially

life-threatening situations that may arise during sports activities. Their presence enhances the overall safety and preparedness of the sports program.

8. **Compliance with regulations:** Many states and athletic associations require the presence of athletic trainers in high school sports programs to ensure compliance with safety standards and regulations. Having an athletic trainer on staff helps schools meet these requirements.

Finally, an athletic trainer in high schools can significantly contribute to student-athletes health, safety, and well-being. Their expertise in injury prevention, management, and education provides valuable support to sports programs and enhances the overall sports experience for student-athletes.