



National Athletic
Trainers' Association

Athletic Training Career Information



What Does a Certified Athletic Trainer Do?

Look around you - people these days are on the move. We're learning more, trying more, doing more. And when the level of physical activity increases, the risk for injury rises as well. That's where the certified athletic trainer comes in: whether it's an athlete of any age or an industrial worker performing physical tasks or even an average citizen delving into recreational athletics, the certified athletic trainer can help.

Certified athletic trainers (ATCs) are medical experts in preventing, recognizing, managing and rehabilitating injuries that result from physical activity. Athletic trainers can help you avoid unnecessary medical treatment and disruption of normal daily life; if you're injured, they can get you on the mend and keep you on the move.

Athletic training is recognized by the American Medical Association as an allied health care profession, and the AMA recommends certified athletic trainers in every high school to keep America's youth safe and healthy. Specifically, the ATC specializes in six practice areas or domains:

- Prevention
- Recognition, evaluation and assessment
- Immediate care
- Treatment, rehabilitation and reconditioning
- Organization and administration
- Professional development and responsibility

As part of a complete health care team, the certified athletic trainer works under the direction of a licensed physician and in cooperation with other health care professionals, athletics administrators, coaches and parents. The ATC gets to know each athlete/patient individually and can treat injuries more effectively because of that.

An ATC's day may, for example, include these tasks:

- Prepare athletes for practice or competition, including taping, bandaging and bracing
- Evaluate injuries to determine their management and possible referral
- Develop conditioning programs
- Implement treatment and rehabilitation programs

These duties require extensive knowledge and strong decision-making skills obtained through the ATC's experience and education.

Where Does a Certified Athletic Trainer Work?

Certified athletic trainers can be found almost anywhere people are physically active. Whether it's on the playing field or in an industrial work setting, ATCs are in place to help active people prevent injuries and stay healthy. Here are some of the places you will find them:

Secondary Schools: Public and private secondary schools offer abundant job opportunities for ATCs. Parents and administrators are discovering the benefits an ATC can offer in preventing and caring for injuries. Many ATCs teach classes at the high school level. The American Medical Association recognizes athletic training as an allied health care profession, and recommends certified athletic trainers be in every high school.

Colleges and universities: Certified athletic training jobs in colleges and universities generally fall into two categories: athletic department staff assignment and combination teacher/athletic trainer.

Professional sports: Although teams operate only a few months per year, ATCs work year-round conditioning and rehabilitating athletes. Fewer jobs are available in this practice setting due to the limited number of teams.

Sports medicine clinics: This growing setting provides ATCs the opportunity to work with a number of different health care professionals and a diverse patient population. In addition to athletic injury rehabilitation, many clinics provide athletic training services for secondary schools via outreach programs.

Military: Each branch of the U.S. military is increasing its use of athletic trainers. ATCs can be found as part of the health care team for active-duty injured service people, on- and off-base fitness and wellness centers, new-recruit readiness programs and pre-enlistment readiness programs, in addition to established military school sports teams.

Industrial and commercial: These settings both use outreach clinics and full-time ATC employees to deliver services. Athletic trainers are a key component to the health care team, and work with physicians and other allied health personnel. As well, ATCs are first-responder medical personnel who are experts in injury assessment and treatment, particularly in the orthopaedic and musculoskeletal disciplines.

Other athletic training employment opportunities include hospitals, health clubs, and the performing arts.

What Education Does a Certified Athletic Trainer Need?

Students who want to become certified athletic trainers must earn a degree from an accredited athletic training curriculum or meet other requirements set by the Board of Certification. A growing number of universities are gaining accreditation through the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP).

Accredited entry-level education programs include formal instruction in a variety of areas, such as:

- Injury / Illness Prevention
- First Aid and Emergency Care
- Assessment of Injury / Illness
- Human Anatomy and Physiology
- Therapeutic Modalities
- Nutrition



Classroom learning is enhanced through clinical education experiences. Under the supervision of a certified athletic trainer, students further develop their knowledge and skills in a wide range of settings, including scholastic sports, interscholastic sports, sports medicine clinics and other venues where ATCs work.

Many students earn their certification after completing the entry-level program. They often continue their studies, however, at an NATA-approved graduate education program. More than 70 percent of certified athletic trainers hold an advanced degree.

What are the Qualifications to Become a Certified Athletic Trainer?

After interested candidates have met the curriculum requirements, they must pass a three-part test administered by the BOC. The exam includes three sections:

- Written
- Written simulation
- Practical

Those who pass the exam are certified, and their certification is retained as long as they meet the continuing education requirements set by the BOC. Continuing education requirements include:

- Completion and reporting of a predetermined number of continuing education units, including recertification in CPR at least once in each three-year term
- Adherence to the BOC Standards of Professional Practice
- Submission of annual BOC annual certification fee or payment of NATA annual dues

Continuing education requirements are meant to ensure that ATCs stay current in the advancements in athletic training. Certified Athletic Trainers:

- Obtain current professional development information
- Explore new knowledge in specific content areas
- Master new athletic training-related skills and techniques
- Expand approaches to effective athletic training
- Further develop professional judgment
- Conduct professional practice in an ethical and appropriate manner



State Licensure & Regulation

In addition to certification, athletic trainers must meet individual state licensing requirements in a growing number of states. To determine if these added requirements apply, ATCs should check with the states in which they practice.

What Financial Aid is Available for Education?

Students who are interested in an athletic training career can explore financial assistance through their educational institution's financial aid offices. These offices have information about many possible sources of aid:

- Scholarships
- Basic educational opportunity grants
- Federal educational opportunity grants
- College work/study programs
- National defense student loans

In addition, the NATA offers scholarships for its members through the NATA Research & Education Foundation. The Foundation has three scholarship categories:

- Undergraduate for college students in their junior year
- Curriculum for college students in the junior year of a curriculum program
- Postgraduate for college students in the final year of undergraduate education or graduate of an undergraduate program.



What is the National Athletic Trainers' Association

NATA is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing, encouraging and improving the athletic training profession. Through its commitment to improving athletes' health and well-being, NATA promotes excellence in athletic health care through public awareness and education.

When ATCs join NATA, they get a variety of products and services:

- Annual Meeting & Trade Show. The largest athletic training trade show in the United States, this four-day event includes educational workshops and clinical sessions featuring nationally-recognized sports medicine experts
- An up-to-date Web site, featuring items exclusively for members
- *NATA News*, the association's award-winning monthly publication, available in both print and online editions
- *Journal of Athletic Training*, the NATA's quarterly scientific journal
- Free access to job vacancy information via the NATA Career Center
- Membership Directory
- Discounted member benefit programs, including professional liability insurance, professional book and literature review service, NATA credit card, and auto insurance
- Government Relations. NATA's government relations department monitors all levels of government for new legislation and initiatives that affect athletic training. The department also provides information on specific legislation and regulation to help NATA members understand how the legislative process affects them
- Public Relations. NATA has an extensive public awareness and education program to keep health care professionals and others up-to-date on the latest athletic training advances through press releases brochures, videos, a speaker's bureau and an international public relations campaign

For more information, visit the NATA Web site at www.nata.org.

Or, contact us at:

NATA

Attn: Membership

2952 Stemmons Freeway • Dallas, TX 75247

214.637.6282 • Fax 214.637.2206



National Athletic
Trainers' Association

National Athletic Trainers' Association

2952 Stemmons Freeway

Dallas, Texas 75247

214.637.6282

www.nata.org