

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, certified athletic trainers must 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 graduates 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 athletic trainers join NATA, they gain a variety of 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.
- *NATA Publications:* The monthly NATA News highlights national, regional and local news and includes articles on the latest

issues affecting certified athletic trainers and other sports medicine professionals. The quarterly Journal of Athletic Training contains in-depth clinical and scientific research articles by experts in sports medicine as well as regular sports medicine columns.

- *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.
- *Job Referral Services:* NATA offers the most comprehensive athletic trainers' job referral service in the United States. Accessible by phone or computer, this service lists job openings in all athletic training settings and locations.
- *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.

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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 five practice areas or domains:

- Prevention of athletic injuries
- Recognition, evaluation and immediate care of athletic injuries
- Rehabilitation and reconditioning of athletic injuries
- Health care administration
- Professional development

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 individually and can treat injuries more effectively.

A certified athletic trainer'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 certified athletic trainer's experience and education.

Where Does a Certified Athletic Trainer Work?

Where are people active? That's where you can find certified athletic trainers.

- *Secondary schools:* Public and private secondary schools offer special job opportunities for ATCs. Parents and administrators are discovering the benefits an ATC can offer in preventing and caring for injuries. Many certified athletic trainers also teach classes at the high school level.
- *Colleges and universities:* Certified athletic trainers' jobs in colleges generally fall into two categories:
 - Athletic department staff assignment.
 - Combination teacher/athletic trainer. Employment in this setting remains stable with little turnover. A majority of colleges and universities now require a master's degree for employment.
- *Professional sports:* In this setting, certified athletic trainers work only one sport, such as football, baseball, basketball, hockey or soccer. 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 certified athletic trainers 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.

- Other possible athletic training employment opportunities include corporate health programs, health clubs, clinical and industrial health care programs, physicians' offices, military branches, performing arts youth sports and recreation, and athletic training education programs.

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 and meet requirements set by the BOC. A growing number of universities are gaining accreditation through the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE).

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

- Prevention of injuries and illness
- Assessment and evaluation of injury/illness
- Emergency care
- Therapeutic modalities
- Therapeutic exercise
- Athletic training program administration
- Human anatomy and physiology
- Exercise physiology
- Kinesiology/biomechanics
- Nutrition
- Psychology
- Pharmacology
- Pathology
- Health care administration

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 continue their studies, however, at an NATA approved graduate education program.

What are the Qualifications to Become a Certified Athletic Trainer?

Certifying athletic trainers ensures high standards of professional practice. Certification by the Board of Certification (BOC) is the entry-level credential and is required by most employers. To be eligible to sit for the certification exam, students must earn a degree from an accredited entry-level athletic training curriculum. Consult the BOC website at www.bocatic.org for details about eligibility.

After interested candidates have met the curriculum requirements, they must then pass a computer-based exam administered by the BOC that assesses cognitive skills, clinical decision making and practical skill applications as outlined in the BOC Role Delineation Study.

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 CEU maintenance fee or payment of NATA annual dues

Continuing education requirements are meant to insure that ATCs stay current in the advancements in athletic training. The purposes of the requirements are that ATCs continue to:

- 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