National Athletic Trainers' Association

Current Status of ATCs in the Military

a report for the National Athletic Trainers' Association

Over the course of the last several years, certified athletic trainers have been increasingly employed by the various Armed Forces to assist in the health and welfare of both active duty soldiers and their dependents. Although each particular branch has it own specific employment policies, most ATCs being hired today are either independent contractors or part of the Government Civil Service system. There are numerous opportunities for certified athletic trainers to work on military instillations within the Morale, Welfare and Recreation system. Billeted active duty ATC positions are very rare at this time and do appear to be a realistic option in the near future. There are however many dual credentialed ATC/PTs that are active duty serving in the Army, Air Force and Navy.

United States Marine Corps

Opportunities for employment within Marine Corps Community Services Semper Fit programs abound for the field of Athletic Training. Semper Fit is comprised of Health Promotion, Sports, Recreation, Fitness and Recreational Safety. Each area boasts a multitude of positions that requires some educational background that mirrors the athletic training curriculums. Given the fact that musculoskeletal injuries remain the single greatest impediment to mission readiness, there is a need for health-care professionals that can bridge the gap between health promotion, recreation, fitness and sports and medicine, a seemingly perfect match for the Athletic Training profession. Job searches in these disciplines can be conducted online at www.usajobs.opm.gov (search job series numbers such as 0188, 0601, 1725, and 0030) or at www.usmc-mccs.com. Additionally, there are currently eight contracted civilian ATCs working directly with Marines. These ATCs are stationed in Quantico, VA, Parris Island, SC, San Diego, CA, Camp Lejune, NC, and Camp Pendleton, CA.

United States Navy

There are numerous opportunities for ATC employment in the Navy. ATCs may choose to work within the Morale, Welfare and Recreation system as Fitness Coordinators. They may also work as Training Specialists in developing safe and effective physical conditioning programs. The Navy Seals have also contracted the services of ATCs to work directly with Seal teams. Currently, the Navy contracts six ATCs to work directly with the SEALs. These contracts are listed as "individual set aside" contracts and may or may not be advertised on the NATA website. As recent as September of 2003, the Navy Medical Center Portsmouth has contracted three ATCs in the orthopedic department to staff ancillary facilities throughout the Hampton, Virginia area. These clinics are very similar to the collegiate setting and are considered walk-in clinics staffed by a Sports Medicine Family Physician, a Chiropractor and one Certified Athletic Trainer. These positions may or may not be advertised through the NATA placement service. There are also numerous opportunities for personal training careers within the Navy community. More recently, an ATC has been assigned to an Air Craft Carrier as the Civilian Afloat

Fitness Director. In addition to these opportunities, the Navy has several SMART centers, which are very similar to collegiate athletic training rooms.

United States Air Force

The opportunities in the Air Force appear limited at this time. Although the U.S.Air Force Academy employs ATCs, there appears to be very few ATCs functioning within this service. At this time there are some dual credentialed ATC/PTs working throughout the Air Force. This should not preclude interested individuals from pursuing employment in the Air Force, particularly within the Morale, Welfare and Recreation system. The following website may provide opportunities for ATCs in various capacities: www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/.

United State Army

Similar to the Air Force, opportunities in the Army have been limited to date. Many of these opportunities can be found at www.cpol.army.mil. Morale, Welfare and Recreation jobs are also advertised on this website. It is unlikely that any Athletic Training positions will be advertised on this site; however ATCs are qualified for some positions under the categories of Arts and Recreation, Education and Training, Medical, Health Science and Public Health, Health Care Technical Support and Social Sciences and Welfare.

Coast Guard

The U.S. Coast Guard currently employs several ATCs at its Initial Training Site at Cape May, NJ. Two ATCs work directly with seaman whiles the other ATC works in the Fitness Center. All three ATCs are contract employees.

Military Service Academies
(Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, Merchant Marine)

The Service Academies have long recognized the skills of certified athletic trainers. Currently there are over 50+ ATC positions between the United States Air Force Academy, United States Naval Academy, United States Military Academy, United States Coast Guard Academy, and United States Merchant Marine Academy and their associated Preparatory Schools. The Service Academies almost exclusively employ civilians to work with cadets and midshipmen. At this time, there is an even mix of contractor and civil service positions. Most of these jobs are advertised on the NATA Career Center when openings occur.

Armed Forces Athletic Training Society

The Armed Forces Athletic Training Society was organized in 2003 for civilian and military ATCs to promote and network within the military channels. Approximately 70 percent of the membership is military and 30 percent civilian. For more information, please contact Maj. Terry DeWitt @ dewitt@obu.edu.

Good luck in your search!

(The views expressed in this paper do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, Department of Defense, nor the United States Government.)