National Athletic
Trainers' Association

February 27, 2008

CAPT Richard Troiano, PhD
Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Public Health and Science
Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
1101 Wootton Parkway, Room LL-100
Rockville, MD 20852

Dear Capt. Troiano:

On behalf of the 30,000 members of the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA), I am pleased to submit comments on the Physical Activity Guidelines to be issued by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). We are responding to the request for comments by Thursday, February 28. With Americans living longer and enjoying physical activity and fitness through all stages of life, NATA commends HHS for its diligent work and broad recommendations for physical activity across the lifespan.

Athletic training is practiced by athletic trainers, who are state licensed or certified health care professionals who collaborate with physicians to optimize physical activity and sports participation of patients and clients. Athletic training encompasses the prevention, diagnosis and intervention of emergency, acute and chronic medical conditions involving impairment, functional limitations and disabilities. Athletic trainers generally work in but are not limited to the fields of physical medicine and rehabilitation services, as defined by the American Medical Association.

Typical patients and clients served by athletic trainers include: recreational, amateur and professional athletes; individuals who have suffered musculoskeletal injuries; those seeking strength, conditioning, fitness and performance enhancement; and others with injuries and illnesses as delegated by the physician. Athletic training services are provided in environments including but not limited to athletic training facilities; schools (K-12, colleges, universities); amateur, professional and Olympic sports venues; clinics, hospitals and physician offices; community facilities and the workplace (including commercial and government), among other locations.

Athletic trainers have a minimum of a bachelor's degree in athletic training (70 percent have a master's or higher) and maintain professional certification through the Board of Certification, an organization independent of NATA. Athletic trainers differ from

personal trainers or “trainers,” who focus solely on fitness and conditioning and have very different educational and certification requirements.

NATA advocates for federal government policies and legislation to ensure Medicare, Medicaid and privately insured beneficiaries have ready access to high quality health care delivered by qualified health care professionals under the direction of physicians. NATA advocates for equal access to athletic trainers for patients and clients of all ages and supports the Access to Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Services Improvement Act of 2007 (HR 1846). The Act will ensure that Medicare beneficiaries have better access to quality health care provided by state licensed or certified health care professionals.

Athletic trainers, working under their state scope of practice and the direction of a physician:

- Increase the quality of patient care and satisfaction;
- Decrease the cost to the health care system through early injury assessment and accelerated rehabilitation methods that promote quicker return to activity;
- Improve access to care because athletic trainers are well distributed through urban, suburban and rural areas;
- Reduce the shortage of health care workers with its 30,000 licensed or credentialed practitioners;
- Expand patient treatment options and access to health care as a frequent provider of choice of physicians;
- Utilize their first-responder specialized training to respond to national health care emergency situations.

In continuation of its work, NATA:

- *Helps set the standard for a wide range of health conditions* through publication and dissemination of its consensus, position, support and official statements including: heat illness; fluid replacement; emergency planning in athletics; sudden cardiac arrest in athletes; disordered eating in athletes; lightening safety in recreation and athletics; management of asthma in athletics; management of sport-related concussions; the use of automated external defibrillators; communicable and infectious diseases at the secondary school level; and appropriate medical coverage and care of secondary school and collegiate athletes, among other timely health topics.

- *Supports and promotes* the **Journal of Athletic Training**, the official scientific publication of NATA, and a highly respected and sourced journal for ongoing research and study of health conditions and related issues.

- *Disseminates timely information to media, consumers, health care professionals, parents, coaches, athletic directors, student athletes and others* on a wide range of health and wellness topics to encourage pre-participation exams before any physical activity; to provide appropriate prevention and treatment of

musculoskeletal and other injuries on and off the playing field and in the workplace; to address the onset of degenerative musculoskeletal conditions as we age and to ensure maximum mobility and range of motion through proper modification of activity.

- *Established timely and strategic partnerships* to leverage public service and general education platforms regarding health and wellness initiatives across the life span. Some of the partner organizations include:

  - American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons;
  - National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity;
  - National Federation of State High School Associations;
  - National Collegiate Athletic Association;
  - Medical Fitness Association;
  - American College of Sports Medicine;
  - American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine;
  - American Medical Society for Sports Medicine;
  - President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sport, among others.

The 30,000 practicing athletic trainers are uniquely qualified health care professionals who specialize in the injury prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of musculoskeletal conditions for people of all ages and stages of physical condition.

NATA members are well suited to deliver health care and wellness services, which are crucial to ensuring access to affordable health care in the U.S. While only 42 percent of high schools have access to athletic trainers, NATA continues to educate influencers, media, health care professionals and the general public on the need for athletic trainers in schools – and all walks of life – to reduce the risk of injury and onset of chronic musculoskeletal conditions, and to ensure immediate and onsite care of individuals so they can prevent or treat injury and return to activity at any stage of life.

Sincerely,

Eve Becker-Doyle, CAE
Executive Director