



# Athletic Trainers in Public Safety

## REDUCING RISK AND IMPROVING HEALTH CARE

Athletic trainers (ATs) are health care professionals with a unique skill set designed to reduce risk and enhance wellness in active patient populations. While not traditional athletes, public safety workers face physically demanding environments, and in some cases, their lives and the lives of others are at stake. It is imperative that these individuals have the necessary health care services to perform their duties. ATs work with various public safety agencies including fire, rescue, emergency medical services and law enforcement to improve health and safety on the job. In the realm of public safety, ATs combine preventative strategies, emergency care and rehabilitation to ensure that public safety workers can perform at optimal levels. ATs apply their research skills to better understand the risks of these patients through injury tracking and documentation, as well as how to reduce risk with evidence based policies and procedures. ATs in the public safety setting typically work within a cost containment model and use their administrative skills to navigate insurance, workers compensation and reduce health care costs. ATs working in public safety is still novel in many parts of the country. Agencies that wish to employ an AT can hire an AT directly for full time or part time services. Area hospitals and physical therapy clinics may also provide athletic training services to government agencies through community outreach programs. ATs in the public safety setting provide immediate access to health care, facilitate necessary referrals for specialized care, return patients to a complete return to duty and advocate for the patient's best care.

### About Athletic Trainers

- ✓ Must graduate from an accredited educational program and pass a comprehensive, national certification exam.
- ✓ Are licensed and otherwise regulated in 49 states and the District of Columbia. Efforts continue to gain regulation in California.
- ✓ Must keep their knowledge and skills current by participating in continuing education.
- ✓ In conjunction with the state practice act, the athletic trainer's individual education, training and skill set determines their unique scope of practice.

# Public Safety ATs

## PROVIDE HEALTH CARE WITH IMPACT

### Injury and Illness Prevention and Wellness Promotion

Athletic trainers promote healthy lifestyle behaviors through education and communication to enhance wellness and minimize the risk of injury and illness among many different patient populations.



### Examination, Assessment and Diagnosis

Athletic trainers provide on-site and evidence based examinations and assessments to formulate valid clinical diagnoses and determine patients' plan of care. This immediate access to health care improves patient outcomes, reduces time away from school or work and minimizes unnecessary trips to the emergency department.



### Immediate and Emergency Care

Athletic trainers integrate best practices in immediate and emergency care for optimal outcomes. Athletic trainers are prepared to respond to many types of emergency situations, depending on the patients they are caring for. Some of the types of emergencies that athletic trainers are skilled to respond to include heat illness, fractures and dislocations, cervical spine injuries, and sudden cardiac arrest.



### Therapeutic Intervention

Athletic trainers rehabilitate and recondition injuries, illnesses and general medical conditions with the goal of achieving optimal activity level using the applications of therapeutic exercise, modality devices and manual techniques. The provision of on-site rehabilitation minimizes time away from work or school for the patient.



### Health Care Administration

Athletic trainers integrate best practices in policy construction and implementation, documentation and basic business practices to promote optimal patient care and employee well-being. In addition to the policy development, athletic trainers help manage referrals and play a valuable role as a care coordinator for their patients. In administrative roles, athletic trainers must manage a team of health care providers as well as the contracts and legal requirements for the provision of care across their community.

