



NATA 2026-2029 Strategic Plan

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Mission

To advance the athletic training profession while empowering athletic trainers as trusted and respected health care providers.

Vision

Athletic training is universally recognized as integral in the delivery and advancement of health care.

Values

Belonging
Collaboration

Integrity

Leadership

Responsibility

Domains

Advocacy
Practice Advancement

Professional and Career Development

AT Community

Organizational Excellence

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Domain 1: Advocacy

Goal 1

Boldly advocate for professional recognition, workforce protection, and public understanding of AT value.

Objective 1.1

Champion full recognition and protection of athletic trainers by removing barriers and enabling practice at the top of their expertise across all settings.

Strategies

Lead coordinated regulatory, licensure, and payer-recognition strategies to expand recognition and reimbursement eligibility across states and practice settings.

Modernize state practice acts to align with current athletic training education, competencies, and skillset.

Assess models used to justify and fund AT jobs and create resources for school districts and administrators.

Partner with the Board of Certification to expand interstate licensure portability and government/employer workforce recruiting and retention initiatives.

Drive employment growth and integration of athletic trainers across new and existing practice settings.

Objective 1.2

Elevate and demonstrate the clinical and economic value of athletic trainers to employers to drive fair compensation, expanded roles, and stronger, sustainable workplaces.

Strategies

Educate employers on the clinical, operational, and financial value of athletic trainers to drive informed hiring and utilization decisions.

Strengthen workforce recruitment and retention through employer-focused strategies that highlight team-based staffing models, role clarity, and value.

Create education and resources for physicians and employers on how to hire, leverage and retain athletic trainers.

Objective 1.3

Increase public recognition of athletic trainers as essential leaders in health, safety, and performance through powerful storytelling, visibility, and global advocacy.

Strategies

Leverage strategic storytelling and member amplification to highlight real-world impact and elevate the profession's narrative.

Continuously elevate NATA as the premiere athletic training advocacy organization across sports medicine and health care.

Expand public relations efforts to increase audience reach, media presence, and stakeholder engagement.

Work with the IOC, FIFA, pro leagues, and others to ensure that ATs are appropriately titled and credentialed.

Modernize and optimize public platforms to enhance visibility, accessibility, and public engagement.

Objective 1.4

Establish athletic trainers as the recognized leaders in sports safety by expanding access, forging powerful partnerships, and amplifying a unified, influential voice.

Strategies

Expand and strengthen strategic partnerships with national and international health, sport, and safety organizations to advance shared priorities.

Expand reciprocal agreements with other associations.

Expand access to ATs in the secondary school and youth sports settings.

Join or build strategic alliances and coalitions with professional societies and stakeholder groups to amplify collective impact and unified messaging.

Domain 2: Practice Advancement

Goal 2

Advance athletic training through data, innovation, and systems-based care that elevates outcomes, proves value, and expands influence.

Objective 2.1

Empower athletic trainers to lead with data and evidence by advancing standardized practices, unlocking actionable insights, and demonstrating the full clinical and economic value of care.

Strategies

Standardize documentation, coding, and outcome-reporting practices to align athletic training services with payer and regulatory requirements and to minimize risks to AT practice.

Define and centralize data collection pertaining to AT practice and athlete outcomes to support research, advocacy, evidence-based practice and employer education.

Generate and disseminate outcomes and cost-avoidance data that demonstrate the increasing risks in sports medicine and the clinical and financial value of athletic training services to payers, employers, school districts, and health systems.

Utilize data to support the creation of standardized protocols, best practice documentation and point-of-care resources that empower timely, evidence-based practice and position ATs as trusted partners to clinicians and administrators.

Objective 2.2

Define and scale a systems-based model of athletic training that sets the standard for safety, continuity, and quality while unlocking sustainable, high-value care across all settings.

Strategies

Define a systems framework for AT services, including safety protocols, care continuity and coordination, quality improvement, risk reduction, and outcomes measurement, and train ATs and organizations to implement.

Establish standardized safety protocols and continuity-of-care frameworks for high-risk conditions and athlete transitions, including heat illness, concussion management, and medical history transfer.

Recognize organizations that adhere to recommendations / best practice and establish appropriate safety and compliance protocols.

Develop collaborative partnerships with payers, health systems, the military, and employer groups to pilot and scale reimbursable athletic training service models.

Objective 2.3

Position athletic trainers at the forefront of sports medicine through integration of emerging technologies and strong collaboration across the health care team.

Strategies

Position NATA as the expert convener for use of emerging technologies and practice innovation in AT and sports medicine and build partnerships with industry providers.

Leverage the expertise and knowledge of NATA partners to develop integrated technologies and education.

Integrate interprofessional collaboration into educational design and delivery to enhance team-based patient care.

Strengthen the strategic collaboration with external organizations to integrate athletic training perspective, models and findings into emerging sports medicine research, innovation and clinical best practices.

Objective 2.4

Expand the athletic training scope by removing barriers, strengthening clinical partnerships, and creating clear pathways for specialization and professional growth.

Strategies

Remove barriers to AT practice by partnering with physicians and other health care providers and administrators.

Support the expansion of specialization in athletic training.

Provide affordable liability insurance to protect AT practice.

Educate and protect physicians who supervise ATs and work with physician organizations to improve support for AT practice.

Domain 3: Professional and Career Development

Goal 3

Proactively prepare athletic trainers for the future through innovative education, business acumen, and leadership skills.

Objective 3.1

Ignite career growth and professional impact by delivering dynamic, accessible continuing education that strengthens clinical excellence, fuels innovation, and expands opportunities for every athletic trainer.

Strategies

Continually develop offerings to support the clinical and non-clinical education needs of ATs, and expand and promote EducATe Enhanced Access as a core member benefit tied to retention.

Translate evidence into applied clinical practice and strengthen clinical decision-making through experiential learning, point of care tools and just-in-time resources.

Right-size and innovate the NATA Convention based on the results of the Future of Convention Task Force, consultant and staff recommendations.

Expand education on the business of athletic training and support AT entrepreneurship.

Objective 3.2

Expand career possibilities by defining clear, dynamic pathways that empower athletic trainers to pursue meaningful, evolving, and personalized professional journeys.

Strategies

Map career pathways and skill/competency requirements and align NATA educational offerings.

Utilize continuing education to prepare ATs for expanding or high-need roles as the profession evolves.

Elevate the NATA Career Center to be the most premiere and comprehensive resource for all ATs throughout their careers.

Objective 3.3

Support athletic training educators through personalized development, strong networks, and national alignment that advance program excellence and student success.

Strategies

Partner with the CAATE, BOC and other key stakeholders to develop a nationally aligned preceptor training framework and microcredential that advances consistency, accountability, and professional recognition.

Equip Program Directors and clinical education leaders with the tools, training, and networks to advance program quality and student readiness.

Establish a continuous engagement model that integrates professional development, peer connection, and recognition for AT educators.

Strengthen program outcomes through integrated certification preparation resources.

Objective 3.4

Advance the profession and expand global influence by strengthening research, elevating NATA as a trusted knowledge leader, and accelerating the translation of evidence into practice.

Strategies

Improve sustainability and readership of NATA's journals.

Increase visibility of NATA as a trusted source of clinical and professional knowledge.

Strengthen research-to-practice translation through integration of journal content into education offerings.

Partner with the NATA Foundation to identify new trends and gaps in evidence-based practice and to utilize research to reinforce professional standards.

Domain 4: AT Community

Goal 4

Foster a strong sense of community and belonging for each and every athletic trainer.

Objective 4.1

Attract and retain the best and brightest by inspiring the next generation to pursue athletic training, while protecting AT career longevity.

Strategies

Strengthen recognition of athletic training as a desirable career path for middle/high school students, college students, ROTC, and former athletes.

Promote athletic training interest groups at high school and pre-AT college level.

Enhance workplace protections and recognize excellent AT work environments.

Create peer support referral pathways and support continuation and expansion of ATs Care.

Objective 4.2

Strengthen member value and professional pride by delivering meaningful, visible impact while empowering states and districts to deepen connection, engagement, and local influence.

Strategies

Ensure that members and leaders can clearly recognize and articulate the value of membership.

Strengthen support for states and districts to deliver value at all levels.

Leverage technology to improve timely access to resources and create a more personalized experience.

Improve storytelling to highlight wins, achievements and accomplishments to showcase NATA's impact on behalf of ATs.

Objective 4.3

Build a connected and inclusive professional community that fosters collaboration, mentorship, and meaningful relationships.

Strategies

Foster a connected professional environment where students, practitioners, and patients are recognized, respected, and equipped to thrive.

Embed a culture of courtesy, fairness, and dignity across all interactions by ensuring athletic trainers are equipped to provide the highest quality of health care and education.

Create opportunities for peer-to-peer connection and engagement and create space for respectful discourse on polarizing issues.

Objective 4.4

Empower athletic trainers to advocate with confidence and step into leadership by breaking down barriers, expanding access, and creating meaningful pathways to professional advancement.

Strategies

Eliminate barriers and expand access to health care and increase access to leadership, education, and the profession of athletic training.

Support athletic trainers in developing the confidence, skills, and support to lead and contribute meaningfully to the profession.

Create powerful, fulfilling opportunities for ATs to advance their careers and profession through NATA volunteer roles and ensure that they are recognized and appreciated.

Domain 5: Organizational Excellence

Goal 5

Ensure NATA's growth and sustainability through strategic investment, effective governance and efficient operations.

Objective 5.1

Deliver a modern, intuitive, and personalized digital experience that connects athletic trainers to timely, relevant, and easy-to-access resources.

Strategies

Provide a mobile-first, accessible, personalized experience for all NATA web platforms.

Update the NATA website to improve navigation, increase searchability, and centralize resources.

Create peer support referral pathways and support continuation and expansion of ATs Care.

Objective 5.2

Evolve governance structures to drive strategic alignment, empower leaders at every level, and maximize collective impact through effective stewardship, collaboration, and meaningful member representation.

Strategies

Assess governance practices, policies and committee structure to advance the strategic plan, resource effectively, and ensure that all members find their niche within the larger association.

Support ongoing education and development of the NATA Board of Directors, NATA volunteer leaders, and district/state leaders to clarify roles, grow leadership skills and improve communication and collaboration.

Optimize the relationships of states, districts, and affiliates with the NATA to maximize collective impact.

Objective 5.3

Drive a high-performing, future-ready organization by strengthening operations, embracing innovation, and aligning resources to scale impact and deliver exceptional value to members.

Strategies

Create a culture of high performance and foster opportunities for development and succession planning.

Improve business development tracking / centralization of contacts and opportunities.

Include ongoing member feedback in the development of new benefits and offerings.

Improve support for efficiency and effectiveness at state and district levels.

Evaluate technology platforms, improve integration between systems, and create a long-term roadmap to improve NATA operations.

Objective 5.4

Invest strategically in new opportunities that drive sustainable growth, expand impact, and generate new value for athletic trainers and the profession.

Strategies

Thoughtfully invest in new opportunities to grow revenue, reputation or impact.

Create a process for reviewing and evaluating the return on projects and programs and sunseting as appropriate.

Evaluate AT market offerings and identify opportunities to partner, endorse or compete to meet AT needs and focus resources.