



National Athletic  
Trainers' Association

# Athletic Training Career Information



## 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 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. The certified athletic trainer specializes in six practice areas or domains:

- Prevention
- Clinical evaluation and diagnosis
- Immediate care
- Treatment, rehabilitation and reconditioning
- Organization and administration
- Professional responsibility

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 certified athletic trainer gets to know each athlete/patient individually and can treat injuries more effectively because of that.

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?

Certified athletic trainers can be found almost anywhere people are physically active. Whether it's on the playing field or in an industrial work setting, certified athletic trainers are in place to help active people prevent injuries and stay healthy. Here are some of the places you will find them:

**Secondary Schools:** Public and private secondary schools offer abundant job opportunities for certified athletic trainers. Parents and administrators are discovering the benefits a certified athletic trainer can offer in preventing and caring for injuries. Many certified athletic trainers teach classes at the high school level. The American Medical Association recognizes athletic training as an allied health care profession, and recommends certified athletic trainers be in every high school.

**Colleges and universities:** Certified athletic training jobs in colleges and universities generally fall into two categories: athletic department staff assignment and combination teacher/athletic trainer.

**Professional sports:** Although teams operate only a few months per year, certified athletic trainers 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 via outreach programs.

**Military:** Each branch of the U.S. military is increasing its use of athletic trainers. Certified athletic trainers can be found as part of the health care team for active-duty injured service people, on- and off-base fitness and wellness centers, new-recruit readiness programs and pre-enlistment readiness programs, in addition to established military school sports teams.

**Industrial and commercial:** These settings utilize both outreach clinics and full-time certified athletic trainers to deliver services. Athletic trainers are a key component to the health care team, and work with physicians and other allied health personnel. Certified athletic trainers are first-responder medical personnel who are experts in injury assessment and treatment, particularly in the orthopaedic and musculoskeletal disciplines.

Other athletic training employment opportunities include hospitals, health clubs, and the performing arts.

## 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 or meet other requirements set by the Board of Certification (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:

- Injury / Illness Prevention
- First Aid and Emergency Care
- Assessment of Injury / Illness
- Human Anatomy and Physiology
- Therapeutic Modalities
- Nutrition



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 certified athletic trainers work.

Many students earn their certification after completing the entry-level program. They often continue their studies, however, at an NATA-approved graduate education program. More than 70 percent of certified athletic trainers hold an advanced degree.

## What are the Qualifications to Become a Certified Athletic Trainer?

- Graduation from an accredited athletic training education program

After interested candidates have met the curriculum requirements, they must pass an examination administered by the BOC.

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, at least once in each three-year term
- Adherence to the *BOC Standards of Professional Practice*
- Submission of annual BOC certification fee or payment of NATA annual dues

Continuing education requirements are meant to ensure that certified athletic trainers stay current in the advancements in athletic training. Certified athletic trainers:

- 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



## 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 should 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 graduate 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 certified athletic trainers join NATA, they get a variety of products and services:

- Annual Meeting & Trade Show. The largest athletic training trade show in the United States, this event includes educational workshops and clinical sessions featuring nationally-recognized sports medicine experts
- An up-to-date Web site, featuring items exclusively for members
- *NATA News*, the association's award-winning monthly publication, available in both print and online editions
- *Journal of Athletic Training*, the NATA's award-winning scientific journal
- Free access to job vacancy information via the NATA Career Center
- Online Membership Directory
- Discounted member benefit programs, including professional liability insurance, travel services, office supplies, credit card, home and auto insurance
- 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
- 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

For more information, visit the NATA Web site at [www.nata.org](http://www.nata.org).

Or, contact us at:

NATA

Attn: Membership

2952 Stemmons Freeway • Dallas, TX 75247

214.637.6282 • Fax 214.637.2206



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Dallas, Texas 75247

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