



NATA Position and Efforts on the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Standard Occupational Classification for Athletic Trainers

Background

The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system is utilized by Federal statistical agencies to classify workers into occupational categories for the purpose of collecting, calculating, or disseminating data. The SOC differs from the Occupational Outlook Handbook, which provides information on duties, education and training, pay, and outlook for hundreds of occupations. The SOC was established in 1994 by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and it has been revised twice, in 2000 and 2010, by the inter-agency SOC Revision Policy Commission (SOCPC). In 2012, preparations began for another revision process to produce a 2018 SOC. The accurate defining and grouping of athletic trainers (ATs) under the SOC system is important not only because of the labor research it informs, but also because of the influence that the SOC definition and grouping may have on hiring, salary, and other employment decisions for ATs.

NATA Position and Efforts

NATA has concerns that the proposed 2018 SOC fails to accurately acknowledge the education, certification, licensure, training, and qualifications of ATs. Specifically, NATA is advocating for changes to the definition, job titles, and grouping of ATs in the preliminary documents. To that end, NATA submitted official comments during the 2014 public comment period, and again during the 2016 comment period that ended on September 20. Prior to submitting formal comments, NATA representatives participated in an in-person meeting with the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and received useful feedback for suggesting successful revisions to the 2018 SOC definition of ATs. Based on what was expressed by BLS during our meeting, NATA opted to not implement a member-level letter writing campaign. The Board of Certification, Inc. (BOC) and the Health Professions Network also submitted letters in support of NATA's recommendations to the SOCPC. To read NATA's final 2016 comment letter, as well as the letters from the BOC and Health Professions Network, please click [here](#). NATA looks forward to seeing the final version of the 2018 SOC when it is released in 2017.

In mid-September, in addition to the meeting with BLS to discuss the revisions to the SOC, NATA representatives met with BLS staff responsible for updating the Occupational Outlook Handbook. As a product of our meeting, BLS committed to utilizing NATA as a resource during its ongoing efforts to update the AT occupation profile within the Occupational Outlook Handbook.

Overview of Requested Changes

The currently proposed 2018 SOC definition of ATs is as follows: *Evaluate and advise individuals to assist recovery from or avoid athletic-related injuries or illnesses, or maintain peak physical fitness. May provide first aid or emergency care.* NATA believes the current SOC definition fails to accurately reflect the education, training, scope of practice, and experience of ATs. Therefore, NATA urged the SOCPC to consider a new definition similar to the following: *Evaluate and assess active or musculoskeletal injuries or illnesses and design and implement rehabilitation and therapeutic intervention programs. May provide immediate and emergency care.*

Sources:

<http://www.bls.gov/soc/>

<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/>

In addition, NATA asked the SOCPC to update its Direct Match Title File regarding job titles that ATs may have. NATA recommended that the SOCPC replace “clinical athletic instructor” with “athletic trainer educator” or “athletic trainer instructor.” Further, NATA recommended that “resident athletic trainer” be replaced with “resident assistant athletic trainer” or “athletic training graduate assistant” to reflect those students who have a Bachelor’s degree and currently are enrolled in an athletic training graduate studies program.

Finally, in the current and proposed 2018 SOC, ATs are listed under the in the following grouping:

- Major Group (29-0000) Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations
- Minor Group (29-9000) Other Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations
- Broad Group (29-9090) Miscellaneous Health Practitioners and Technical Workers

However, it is NATA’s belief that the education requirements of and services provided by ATs are most similar to those of professions listed under “Therapists.” Accordingly, NATA urged the SOCPC to move ATs to the following grouping:

- Major Group (29-0000) Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations
- Minor Group (29-1000) Healthcare Diagnosing or Treating Practitioners
- Broad Group (29-1120) Therapists

For more information, contact:

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