

A Reimbursement Model for Industrial/Occupational Athletic Trainers

Definition:

Athletic training programs in industrial/occupational settings that use full or part-time certified athletic trainers (ATs) and want to bill industrial companies for their services.

Objective:

To receive reimbursement from industrial companies for services rendered to employees and other individuals (spouses, retirees, contractors, etc) associated with the company.

Typical Services Provided:

Injury rehabilitation, injury prevention, ergonomics, job site evaluations, initial injury evaluations, emergency/first aid medical care, work conditioning, work hardening, functional capacity evaluations, functional job descriptions, return to work programs, prevention education programs, health promotion, general wellness and fitness, case management, and counseling.

Audience and Patient Population:

Employees, employee spouses, retirees, retiree spouses, contractors and dependents.

Who Pays:

Industrial companies-usually from the safety, occupational health or human resources budget.

First Steps:

For a variety of reasons, the industrial setting can be a difficult market to penetrate so the first step is to secure a contract. This is a lengthy and detailed process that involves a background and skills in marketing, negotiating, and sales. It is important to know and talk the language of management; and that language is money. Having experience in defining and calculating such financial formulas as return on investment, net present value, and payback period is important. Throughout the process it needs to be determined what services are going to be provided – some companies prefer an all-inclusive package while others prefer to go a step at a time and may start with on-site rehab, then ergonomics, then work conditioning, etc.

Make sure you know your state licensure act and what you can/can not provide as a licensed and/or certified athletic trainer. In most cases it would be advisable to have a Corporate Medical Director. The company may already have their own medical director or you may have to seek out the services of a local physician to serve as the medical director.

Recommended or Required Tools:

- 1) Computer software and hardware systems used to track patients and maintain clinical records, a billing system and billing staff or a billing service.
- 2) A policy and procedure book, HIPAA/FERPA compliance manuals (should be included in your P&Ps).
- 3) Office space. This will be dependent upon the services provided.

Licenses and Regulations:

It is essential to review and know your practice act and licensure law as the services you provide must be within the legal limitations. However, the legal limitations of each state's practice act are, many times, open to interpretation.

There are states where a legal review can be helpful in defining scope of practice, setting and audience. You also need to verify that any other city, county or state licenses would not be required for you to legally bill for services.

Determine Costs/Set A Budget:

The services ATCs provide for industrial companies vary greatly so projecting accurate costs is difficult. The following are some items or costs that will probably be universal.

- Computer \$4,000-\$7,000
- A secure fax machine and computer printer due to privacy regulations

Education and Training:

In addition to maintaining and renewing your NATABOC certification, you may want to take other adjunct classes to enhance your knowledge. In the industrial setting it is advantageous to be able to discuss and calculate financial formulas (payback period, return on investment, net present value, cost avoidance, etc). Knowing these terms is vital when discussing cost benefit/cost justification with the company's management.

Documentation:

For medical and legal reasons the medical documentation criteria listed should already be a part of your daily work habits. When you are billing and receiving reimbursement, these guidelines definitely need to be followed.

- Initial evaluation, including plan of treatment and goals (SOAP notes)
- Appropriate patient medical history
- Patient examination results
- Functional assessment
- Type of treatment and body part(s) to be treated
- Expected frequency and number of treatments
- Prognosis
- Goals-should be functional, measurable and timebased
- Precautions and contraindications should be noted
- A statement that the treatment plan and goals were discussed and understood by the patient and possibly by the guardian
- Maintain daily treatment records
- Record any changes in physical status, physician orders or treatment plan or goals
- Weekly progress notes especially on goals should be kept (SOAP or functionbased)
- Copies of notes to or from the referring physician's office whether by fax, e-mail, and U.S. mail or by phone.
- A prescription or other state mandated documentation from a physician.

Pricing:

There are various billing options within the industrial setting. Some of these options include:
Flat-fee Model: Charges a pre-determined amount per month for athletic training services. For example, the company will pay \$ xxx per month for the athletic trainer to provide on-site services.

Pay-as-you-go Model: Charges a pre-determined amount based per each patient/service/program provided. For example, the athletic trainer will bill the company:

- \$xxx per modality performed
- \$xxx per educational program provided
- \$xxx per hour for ergonomic-related work
- \$xxx per patient treated

Profit sharing Model: Charges a pre-determined amount, but also has incentive-clauses built into the contract. For example, the athletic trainer can charge \$xxx per hour and also get 25% of "savings." This is a very risky billing option and the incentive clause needs to be clearly outlined.

Revenue Potential:

The revenue you receive from industrial companies is limited by your setting, your time available to treat patients and what the market is willing to pay. The size and abilities of your staff is a factor in increasing revenue.

Resources:

There are resources available to assist you the NATA staff and volunteer members working with COR can be real assets.

The NATA Web page (www.nata.org, members only section then click on directory, click on Committee on Reimbursement) has a link to listings of state, district and national COR members. The reimbursement manuals developed by NATA are available to members for a minimal fee. The Web is another great source of billing and third party payer information. The billing department at your institution is an additional resource. The billing department should know the payers and can help you learn the billing process.