

Virginia Athletic Trainers Association: College/University Athletic Trainers Committee

Use of Student Aides to Provide Healthcare to Collegiate Student-Athletes

In the college and university setting, many members comprise the student-athlete healthcare team including registered nurses, to billing and insurance coordinators. The VATA encourages certified athletic trainers and their institutions be in compliance with state law regulations. It is our mission to provide proper care to student-athletes while educating athletic trainers to avoid potential litigation against the health care provider and/or institution. The VATA College and University Athletic Training Committee's (CUATC) is aware that non-athletic training students or student aides are potentially performing duties not within their scope. This does not include students currently enrolled in Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE) accredited programs, who have the ability to render patient care under the auditory and visual supervision of a Virginia licensed Athletic Trainer.

Students who are enrolled in a health-related major (such as physical therapy, exercise science, pre-med, etc.) who want to gain healthcare experience in athletic training are not permitted to provide athletic training tasks and services set forth by the Code of Virginia as it relates to Athletic Training. Some of the regulated tasks students are participating in may include setting patients up on modalities (ice is a therapeutic modality), modifying rehab exercises, and covering events (games/practices) without athletic trainer (AT) supervision. Allowing students to perform functions of a licensed AT or athletic training student is a violation in accordance to the Virginia Board of Medicine. Students engaging in such regulated activities put their future professional careers at risk as they will be reported to the Board of Medicine. Furthermore, it degrades athletic training when students are asked to fulfill the role of a Certified Athletic Trainer; it sends a message that a degree is not needed to provide athletic training services.

The duties approved, but not limited to, for non-athletic training students include*:

Proper student aide educational practice:

- Field set up and break down
- Hydration specialization
- Cleaning duties
- Performing inventories
- Stocking kits
- Stocking shelves, taping tables, etc.
- Making ice bags
- Preparing hot packs
- Recognition and referral of emergent situations

While all athletic trainers enjoy additional help delivering athletic training services, it is imperative that all involved in athletic healthcare work in accordance to the state legislature governing the AT profession. Each AT has a standard to uphold and should act as an ambassador to athletic training rather than taking advantage of those students who want a great experience. ATs have a responsibility to provide the best care to the patient and protect athletic training practice. The CUATC urges all college/university ATs to be aware of this issue and to please report any violations you may witness; each AT in the Commonwealth has a responsibility to report violations of the Code of Virginia:

Virginia Department of Health Professions
Perimeter Center
9960 Mayland Drive, Suite 300
Henrico, VA 23233-1463
1-800-533-1560 or (804) 367-4691
Fax: (804) 527-4424
Email: enfcomplaints@dhp.virginia.gov

The VATA is continuing to increase awareness about students in the athletic training setting and would appreciate your support. Please contact the VATA CUATC committee chair, Adam Smith, or your regional representative for further information.

The following items from the Code of Virginia relate to the practice of athletic training and may provide clarification on the use of students in athletic training healthcare:

- **18VAC85-120-120. General responsibilities.**
- A. An athletic trainer shall be responsible for the actions of persons engaging in the practice of athletic training under his supervision and direction.
- B. An athletic trainer shall ensure that unlicensed persons under his supervision shall not perform those functions that require professional judgment or discretion in the practice of athletic training.
- **54.1-2957.6. Exceptions to athletic trainer licensure.**
- The provisions of this section shall not be construed to prohibit any individual from providing first aid, nor any coach, physical education instructor or other person from (i) conducting or assisting with exercise or conditioning programs or classes within the scope of their duties as employees or volunteers or (ii) applying protective taping to an uninjured body part.

For further explanation on this issue (taken from <http://www.vhsl.org/doc/upload/smac-athletic-training-law-va.pdf>):

- **What duties can coaches, teachers and other non-certified adults perform?**

Individuals are permitted to provide basic first aid within the scope of their education and duties, which consists of providing temporary support until professional medical assistance is available and followed by proper referral to a medical doctor if necessary. Non-certified adults, including coaches and volunteers may conduct or assist with exercise or conditioning programs or classes within the scope of their duties as employees or volunteers.

- **If an MD or ATC determines a specific treatment is appropriate, can a coach or non-certified person give the treatment?**

Individuals who possess the skills necessary to perform non-discretionary tasks may perform those tasks under the direction and supervision of an MD or ATC.

You may review the NATA's Code of Ethics for further reference on appropriate coverage issues at: <http://www.nata.org/codeofethics>

*Taken from the "Student-Aide-Letter" from the National Athletic Trainers Association:
<http://www.nata.org/sites/default/files/Student-Aide-Letter.pdf>