

February 8, 2018

Dear Athletic Training Colleagues and Athletic Administrators,

As we begin 2018 and are in the midst of the winter season of High School athletics, there have been a few issues that the NM Athletic Trainers' Association Board needs to address in the practice of Athletic Training. The following issues were observed in multiple capacities over the past few months. Please understand that all perspectives laid out here are based upon NM State laws and Practice Acts, position statements from the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA), as well as best practice standards of care.

The majority of the issues reported involved the improper use of High School Student Aides. The students are a part of the High School Sports Medicine/Athletic Training program and are not to act or represent themselves as an Athletic Trainer in any capacity. This is direct violation of state law. This includes, but is not limited to, high school student aides performing any of the following actions:

- Interpreting referrals from other healthcare providers
- Performing evaluations on a patient
- Making decisions about treatments, procedures, or activities
- Planning patient care
- Independently providing athletic training services during team travel¹

Several of these behaviors were witnessed being performed by individuals and students that were not Licensed Athletic Trainers. If a High School Student Aide is sent with a team in any manner in which they are not directly supervised and/or performing any of the above actions, they are in violation of state statutes and could face ramifications. The NM Athletic Training Practice Board oversees and regulates Athletic Training in NM and will address and reprimand those who are practicing outside of the state statutes.

Situations were reported included: 1) HS Student Aides evaluating acute injuries with return to play decisions being made, 2) evaluation of post-surgical extremities, 3) evaluating acute head trauma on athletes removed from competition by officials due to a possible mechanism of injury, and 4) official team rosters listing HS Student Aides as "Athletic Trainers" alongside licensed staff.

According to NM Statute (SB137)³ any student removed from competition due to a suspected head injury, or a mechanism of injury that draws concern, must be evaluated and cleared by an approved medical provider prior to return to play. Any situation in which a HS student, or other non-approved individual, facilitates this is in direct violation of the law.

At no time is it appropriate for a High School student aide, or any individual not licensed by the State of NM, to be identified as an Athletic Trainer. This is a violation of the NM Athletic Trainers' Practice Act (HB 309, NMSA 61-14D). Any violations of these laws could have a direct impact on the current, or future, licensing of those reported.

Moving forward, the NMATA Board fully supports of our profession and continues to work to make it better. With that said, it is vital that each one of us does our part in addressing these issues as it directly impacts every Athletic Trainer. It is our obligation to ensure that all Athletic Trainers are practicing appropriately and to identify those who are not, so that they may be addressed to protect the profession of Athletic Training, Athletic Trainers, and the community as a whole. It is all our duty to step forward and clean up any inappropriate practices that are occurring currently. For those schools that do have Sports Medicine program and HS student aides, please consider the following:

Proper student aide educational practices include:

- Field set up and take down
- Hydration specialization
- Cleaning duties
- Performing inventories
- Stocking kits

- Stocking shelves, taping tables, etc.
- Making ice bags
- Eyes and ears-sideline recognition of an athlete struggling with heat illness, head injury, etc.
- Give students a different color shirt that says AIDE on the back.

If you are looking for more information on acceptable best practices, please refer to the attachments. These have great examples on proper use of HS Student Aides as well as the rationale behind it.

In summary, what the NMATA board is asking each of our members and administrators to do is to help:

- Identify situations in which individuals are practicing Athletic Training illegally or improperly
- Make an effort to put a stop to it, by directly communicating with fellow ATs and Athletic Administrators following situations
- Report any issues to the NM Athletic Training Practice Board.

We must also make an attempt to work with the organizers and administrators of these events to ensure that they are covered properly while maintaining top level care to the participants.

Please continue to do your part in supporting Athletic Training and lets work together to provide great health care to our student-athletes. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact a NMATA Board member.

Thank you very much for your time and attention to this matter,

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Louis Mayer
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New Mexico State University

1. NATIONAL ATHLETIC TRAINERS' ASSOCIATION: OFFICIAL STATEMENT ON PROPER SUPERVISION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT AIDES <https://www.nata.org/sites/default/files/Student-Aide-Statement.pdf>
2. NATA Student Aide Letter <https://www.nata.org/sites/default/files/student-aide-letter.pdf>
3. NM SB137 Student Athlete Concussion Law <https://www.nmlegis.gov/Sessions/16%20Regular/final/SB0137.pdf>