



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY  
12234

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July 5, 2011

TO: District Superintendents  
Superintendents of Schools  
Nonpublic School Administrators  
Charter School Administrators

FROM: Ken Slentz

SUBJECT: Athletic Trainer Scope of Practice

In order to ensure that students receive appropriate care while participating in interscholastic athletics, the Department would like to clarify the scope of practice of athletic trainers working in schools and the appropriate supervision required of such athletic trainers. Pursuant to Commissioner's Regulation 135.4, schools may only hire a *certified* athletic trainer.

*Persons serving as an athletic trainer shall possess a valid license as a certified athletic trainer from the State of New York issued pursuant to article 162 of the Education Law*

A certified athletic trainer is not an independent practitioner and must be under the supervision of a physician. Education Law § 8351 states:

*As used in this article "athletic trainer" means any person who is duly certified in accordance with this article to perform athletic training under the supervision of a physician and limits his or her practice to secondary schools, institutions of postsecondary education, professional athletic organizations, or a person who, under the supervision of a physician, carries out comparable functions on orthopedic athletic injuries, excluding spinal cord injuries, in a health care organization. Supervision of an athletic trainer by a physician shall be continuous but shall not be construed as requiring the physical presence of the supervising physician at the time and place where such services are performed.*

If a district has included such supervision as part of the job description of the physician hired to be the medical director, that physician must be notified when a certified athletic trainer, whom she/he must supervise, is hired or otherwise retained to provide services. Districts whose medical director is a nurse practitioner must be certain that appropriate arrangements are made to provide physician supervision of the certified athletic trainer

as required by law. Districts may not delegate the responsibility for ensuring supervision by a physician to the certified athletic trainer.

Districts should also be aware that the scope of practice of certified athletic trainers does not include diagnostic privileges or the reconditioning of neurological injuries (which includes concussions), conditions, or diseases. Education Law § 8352 states:

*The practice of the profession of athletic training is defined as the application of principles, methods and procedures for managing athletic injuries, which shall include the preconditioning, conditioning and reconditioning of an individual who has suffered an athletic injury through the use of appropriate preventative and supportive devices, under the supervision of a physician and recognizing illness and referring to the appropriate medical professional with implementation of treatment pursuant to physician's orders. Athletic training includes instruction to coaches, athletes, parents, medical personnel and communities in the area of care and prevention of athletic injuries. The scope of work described herein shall not be construed as authorizing the reconditioning of neurologic injuries, conditions or disease.*

As such, any student athlete who has been injured should be referred to a physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant working under the supervision of a physician for assessment, diagnosis and treatment.

More information on the scope of practice of certified athletic trainers is available at <http://www.op.nysed.gov/prof/at/>. Questions related to school health services should be directed to the Office of Student Support Services, 518-486-6090. Questions related to certified athletic trainers' scope of practice should be directed to the Office of Professions, 518-474-3817 x 560 or emailed to [athlbd@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:athlbd@mail.nysed.gov).