

Understanding Virginia's Athletic Training Law

The Virginia Athletic Trainers Association provides this information about Virginia Code § 54.1-2900. This is provided as information only and should be viewed that way. Any final interpretations of this law should be left to each school system's attorney.

On July 1, 2002, the Virginia Code § 54.1-2900 regulating athletic training went into effect. The practice of school personnel providing medical care to athletes will need to be reviewed and possibly revised to ensure compliance with the new regulations

➤ **Why is athletic training regulated by the state?**

Athletic training, like other healthcare professions, is regulated by the state to protect the public. Standards are set forth by state law to ensure the provider is a qualified professional who has the education and experience necessary to perform his/her duties.

➤ **Who can legally provide athletic training coverage to high school athletes?**

According to the statute, only a certified athletic trainer (ATC), holding a certificate of athletic training with the Virginia Board of Medicine, working under the direction of a licensed physician, may practice athletic training.

➤ **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.

➤ **Can schools still have student athletic trainers and what can they do?**

The NATA recommends that high school students assisting an ATC be referred to as "Athletic Training Student Aides" (ATSA). The law does not limit a student's ability to provide first aid. Student responsibilities should be defined by school policies after consultation with legal counsel.

➤ **What should athletic administrators do to ensure compliance with the new law?**

If the school employs an "athletic trainer", or someone who holds themselves out as an athletic trainer, or practices athletic training, that person must be certified by Virginia's Board of Medicine and maintain those standards. After becoming familiar with the law and regulations, they should review all policies that affect athletic health care (i.e. return to play policies, etc.) to ensure they are legally and scientifically sound.

It's vital that administrators realize the difference between a certified athletic trainer and a "trainer" who may have previously provided healthcare. The law stipulates that anyone working in the capacity of an athletic trainer *must* be certified by Virginia's Board of Medicine. Otherwise, like coaches, their contribution to the athletic health care team is limited to providing first aid and conducting or assisting with exercise or conditioning programs or classes within the scope of their duties as employees or volunteers.

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