

Strategic Alliance Statement

Legal and Ethical Responsibility to Report Unregulated Practice

The leadership of the Strategic Alliance, which includes the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE), the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA), the NATA Research and Education Foundation and the Board of Certification, Inc. (BOC), has concluded that it is necessary to issue a formal statement to remind institutions, employers, Athletic Trainers (ATs) and athletic training students that the practice of athletic training by unregulated individuals must be reported to the appropriate regulatory authorities. Just as unregulated practice is unethical and unprofessional, so is the failure to report this practice. Regulatory mechanisms exist to protect the public and to ensure safe and effective athletic training practice. ATs have both a legal and ethical responsibility to protect the public from those who engage in the practice of athletic training without a proper authorization from a state regulatory agency.

The Strategic Alliance has the responsibility to strongly advocate against the practice of athletic training without proper authorization from a state regulatory agency. The BOC notes a four-fold increase from 2011 to 2012 in the number of disciplinary cases against ATs who were found to have practiced without proper authorization from a state regulatory agency. Additionally, through the course of accreditation site visits, CAATE site visitors have observed the practice of athletic training by persons without a state credential and reported these individuals to the BOC and the appropriate state regulatory agency. Violations of state AT regulations are a breach of the *NATA Code of Ethics*. One of the fundamental characteristics of a healthcare profession is that practitioners are subject to regulatory control. ATs are responsible for the safety of their patients and to the profession. Adherence to legal and ethical standards is vital to the provision of safe and effective patient care and protects the credibility of ATs who practice legally.

An AT who has direct knowledge that an individual is practicing athletic training without state credentials, practicing outside of the scope of their state AT practice act, or is not adhering to the *BOC Standards of Professional Practice (BOC Standards)*, must report the violation to the appropriate state regulatory authority and the BOC via publicly available reporting mechanisms. The *BOC Code of Professional Responsibility 3.5* describes this responsibility as:

“The Athletic Trainer or applicant reports any suspected or known violation of a rule, requirement, regulation or law by him/herself and/or by another Athletic Trainer that is related to the practice of athletic training, public health, patient care or education.”

This ethical duty to report is a common obligation for regulated healthcare professionals. Failure by an AT to report known violators represents a failure to protect the public and the profession. Furthermore, failure to report will result in disciplinary action by the state and/or the BOC. In addition, a program will be subject to disciplinary action if a person associated with a CAATE accredited program fails to report illegal athletic training practice.

To report unlawful AT practice please file a complaint with the BOC. Information about filing a complaint is available at: <http://www.bocatc.org/public/consumer-complaints>



The Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE) is committed to ensuring safe and effective patient care by developing, maintaining, and promoting appropriate minimum education standards for quality athletic training programs. All personnel affiliated with CAATE-accredited professional and post-professional programs must adhere to specific accreditation standards that protect the public and ensure that the practice of athletic training is ONLY performed by Athletic Trainers (AT) credentialed by state regulatory agencies or students enrolled in accredited professional programs who are appropriately supervised by state credentialed ATs. Faculty and preceptors have an ethical obligation to model professional behaviors to their students. Part of this responsibility is to report the unregulated practice of athletic training to the appropriate regulatory authorities. Failure to do so is a violation of the Commission's accreditation standards and the Commission's Ethical Code of Conduct. Suspected violations should be reported to the CAATE and all reports will be investigated by the CAATE and reported to the BOC and state regulatory agencies for further investigation.



As the professional membership organization for Athletic Trainers, the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) views patient care as paramount. As relevant and impactful healthcare professionals, Athletic Trainers and members of the NATA have an important responsibility to their patients and therefore to their profession. NATA members hold their membership by agreeing to a Code of Ethics. Integral to this Code of Ethics is the commitment to practice legally. Complying with all applicable laws and regulations is vital to patient care and also ensures the public trust in the great profession of athletic training. NATA members have the duty to ensure they are practicing legally and just as importantly, to report illegal or unethical practice. NATA strongly encourages its members to fulfill their responsibilities to the profession, to health care in general and to patients.