



# Who Is Protecting Your Kids?

High school athletics in Colorado continue to grow in both participation and complexity. With this growth comes increased medical risk and increasing legal expectations for school districts to provide adequate health and safety oversight.

The strongest protection for Colorado schools is the presence of a BOC certified, state licensed, athletic trainer who manages injury prevention, emergency response, daily medical care, and return-to-play decisions.

## WHAT IS AN ATHLETIC TRAINER?

Certified Athletic Trainers (ATs) are licensed medical professionals specifically educated to prevent, recognize, and manage injuries and medical emergencies in physically active populations. They are trained in concussion care, heat illness, cardiac emergencies, mental health concerns, diabetic episodes, and environmental health risks—conditions that regularly occur in secondary school athletics. Unlike coaches or school nurses with multiple responsibilities, athletic trainers provide continuous, on-site medical coverage, delivering immediate emergency care, evidence-based injury diagnosis, structured rehabilitation, and safe return-to-play decisions.

Employing an athletic trainer is one of the most direct actions a school district can take to reduce liability, strengthen emergency preparedness, and protect student-athletes

## ATHLETIC TRAINERS PROTECT SCHOOL DISTRICTS BY PROVIDING IMPROVED CARE AND REDUCING LIABILITY

More than ever, the employment of ATs within the Secondary School Setting is being viewed as a necessity rather than a luxury. ATs readily provide services of considerable benefit to their school communities including:



Daily medical coverage for practices/competitions



Emergency preparedness and life-saving response



Appropriate return-to-learn and return-to-play management



Consistent injury prevention and documentation



Compliance with evolving state and local safety expectations



COLORADO ATHLETIC TRAINERS' ASSOCIATION



# Who Is Protecting Your Kids?

## NATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

A variety of national medical and educational organizations explicitly recommend hiring certified athletic trainers at the secondary school level.



The NEA emphasizes AT employment as key to: reducing injuries, ensuring equitable care and preventing catastrophic injuries.



The AMA recognizes Athletic Training as an allied health profession, validating ATs as essential healthcare providers.



The AAFP encourages schools with sports programs to make ATs an "integral part of the high school athletic program".



ATs are vital for appropriate medical care in secondary schools, working alongside MDs as an "athletic health care team".



The NATA has firmly established ATs as school's frontline providers for Medical oversight and continuity of care.

## COLORADO CONTEXT

Colorado Secondary Schools face unique challenges with respect to athletic healthcare. ATs help overcome these challenges.



### A Lack of Practitioners

Less than 50% of Colorado Secondary Schools have access to a Certified Athletic Trainer.



### Diverse Sport Offerings

Colorado high school sports include sports with high rates of concussion and musculoskeletal injury.



### Longer Response Times

CO's geography means longer EMS response times, on-site ATs are even more critical.



### Improved Outcomes

Positioning ATs in place of coaches and administrators improves patient outcomes and reduces liability.

## BENEFITS TO SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND THE COMMUNITY

ATs have unique training to assess acute and traumatic injuries and make return-to-play decisions, tasks that coaches or laypersons are not qualified to perform

When catastrophic injuries do occur, high schools that employ an AT have fewer deaths and permanent disabilities. That's a direct safety and liability argument for having an AT at every Colorado high school.

ATs improve early detection of dehydration, heat illness, head injuries, sudden cardiac arrest, and other serious conditions.

ATs serve as on-site healthcare providers, emergency responders, and risk managers—making them essential to student safety, equity of care, and responsible risk stewardship for Colorado school districts.

## CONNECT WITH US

