



Physician Assistant and Athletic Trainer Sideline Coverage **Q & A**

1. What is a Physician Assistant?

A Physician Assistant (PA) is a medical professional who works as part of a medical team with a doctor. A PA is a graduate of an accredited PA educational program who is nationally certified and state-licensed to practice medicine with the supervision of a Physician.

2. What is an Athletic Trainer?

In Pennsylvania an Athletic Trainer (AT) is a licensed medical professional who provides the management and provision of care of injuries to a physically active person, with the direction of a licensed Physician.

3. What are the roles of the Athletic Trainer and the Physician Assistant on an athletic sideline?

The Athletic Trainer and the Physician Assistant are to work collaboratively as a medical team to provide the proper care for injured athletes during an athletic contest. Athletic Trainers and Physician Assistants work under the direction and supervision of a Physician. The scope of practice of a Physician Assistant is outlined in their written agreement with the supervising Physician. Athletic Trainers follow established guidelines from standing orders created by the Physician.

4. Can a Physician Assistant make return to play decisions during an athletic contest?

Yes. Physician Assistants practice within the scope of practice and specialty of the supervising Physician and may make return to play decisions for an athlete following an injury or illness as provided in the written agreement filed with the state.

5. Can an Athletic Trainer make return to play decisions during an athletic contest?

Yes. The Athletic Trainer in compliance with the guidelines in their standing orders from a directing Physician may make return to play decisions for an athlete following injury or illness.

6. Can a Physician Assistant or an Athletic Trainer make return to play decisions immediately following the diagnosis or assessment of concussion symptoms present in a scholastic athlete?

Once the diagnosis of concussion has been determined, an athlete will not return to play that day. Further the athlete should not return to play until evaluated by an appropriate medical professional. Physician Assistants (PA's) and Athletic Trainers (AT's) are licensed health care professionals who are considered appropriate medical professionals as long as they are designated by a physician {Medical

Doctor (MD) or Doctor of Osteopathy (DO)} trained in the management of concussions. Additionally, Physician Assistants and Athletic Trainers should have an established and delineated subsection on concussion included in either their written agreement or standing orders with their physician that discusses criteria on how concussions will be managed from assessment to establishing a safe return to play and school.

7. Does a Physician need to be present in order to supervise a Physician Assistant?

No, but the supervising Physician must be available for consultation with the Physician Assistant at all times through a telecommunication system or other means.

8. Does a Physician need to be present in order to direct an Athletic Trainer?

No. The directing Physician provides standing orders for the Athletic Trainer to provide Athletic Training services. These standing orders are reviewed and signed by the directing Physician on an annual basis. The Athletic Trainer can contact the directing Physician through telecommunication systems or other means as necessary.

9. What services can a Physician Assistant provide during an athletic contest?

The Physician Assistant can provide the same services that their supervising Physician can provide based on the limitations of the supervising Physicians scope of practice. (Family Medicine, Orthopedics etc.)

10. Can a Physician Assistant provide sutures and reduce dislocations as well as other medical skills during an athletic contest?

Yes, as long as the skill provided falls under the scope and skill set of the supervising Physician and the supervising Physician has reviewed the skill with the Physician Assistant.



Yvette Ingram, PhD, LAT, ATC
Pennsylvania Athletic Trainers' Society, Inc.
President

610-496-4192
president@gopats.org

11. If a Physician is going to utilize a Physician Assistant for sideline coverage, should this be documented in the Policy and Procedures and the Emergency Action Plan for the Physician Assistant?

Yes. For Clarification purposes, the use of any health care professional under the supervision or direction of a Physician should be written into the Policy and Procedures Manual and the Emergency Action Plan for the practice. This would include the Physician Assistant.

12. Can a Physician Assistant write a prescription for rehabilitation services?

Yes. A Physician Assistant can write a prescription for rehabilitation services. This indicates the importance of having a collaborative relationship between the Athletic Trainer and the Physician Assistant so the Physician Assistant can utilize the Athletic Trainer for rehabilitation services.