

Written Protocols 101

In Pennsylvania, Athletic Trainers are bound to providing athletic training services in compliance with Pennsylvania state law and the rules and regulations which are set forth by the State Boards of Medicine and Osteopathic Medicine. Athletic trainers can ONLY provide athletic training services under the direction of a licensed physician. Physician identified as an MD, DO, DDS, or Podiatrist.

Therefore, for an athletic trainer to provide athletic training services to anyone, regardless of setting, a written protocol and standing written prescription defines how communication will occur with the physician, establishes standard operating procedures, and designates the individuals which the AT can provide athletic training services to. Specifically, these regulations state:

“Written protocol-- A written agreement or other document developed in conjunction with one or more supervising physicians, which identifies and is signed by the supervising physician and the certified athletic trainer, and describes the manner and frequency in which the certified athletic trainer, and describes the manner and frequency in which the certified athletic trainer regularly communicates with the supervising physician and includes standard operating procedures, developed in agreement with the supervising physician and certified athletic trainer, that the certified athletic trainer follows when not directly supervised onsite by the supervising physician.” (49 PA Code: Chapter 18, Subchapter H, Section 18.502; and Chapter 25, Subchapter M, Section 25.702).

*“Standing written prescription—*A portion of the written protocol or a separate document from a supervising physician, which includes an order to treat approved individuals in accordance with the protocol.” (49 PA Code: Chapter 18, Subchapter H, Section 18.502; Chapter 25, Subchapter M, Section 25.702).

Athletic trainers CANNOT provide athletic training services to individuals beyond those identified in the written protocol, which has been reviewed and approved by their directing physician. To do so is a violation of these rules and regulations. If an athletic trainer practices outside these rules and regulations they and their worksite are open to fines up to \$10,000, revocation of their license and other legal action.

To view the entire rules and regulations governing the practice of athletic training in the Commonwealth, please go to <http://www.pacode.com/secure/data/049/chapter18/subchapHtoc.html> and <http://www.pacode.com/secure/data/049/chapter25/chap25toc.html> . You are also able to contact the State Board of Medicine by clicking http://www.dos.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/bureau_of_professional_occupational_affairs/12483 as per 49 PA Code Ch 18 Subchapter H section 18.509(c) and; the State Board of Osteopathic Medicine http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_85080_0_0_43/http://pubcontent.state.pa.us/publishedcontent/publish/cop_general_government_operations/dos/am/content/professional_occupational_affairs/health_related_boards/state_board_of_osteopathic_medicine/mission_statement.html?qid=71883720&rank=1 Ch 25 subchapter M section:25.709

The written protocol can be confusing at times. The Pennsylvania Athletic Trainer's Society is here to help its members and the general public in understanding these regulations. For examples, click ["Written Protocol"](#) or ["Short Term Written Protocol"](#) to take you to documents section of PATS website where these are located.