



Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Athletic Trainers Board



GUIDELINES FOR MAKING RETURN TO PLAY DECISIONS BY AN OHIO LICENSED ATHLETIC TRAINER

This document is being provided by the Ohio AT Section, which is responsible for the scope of practice for athletic training in the State of Ohio and the Ohio Athletic Trainers' Association, the professional organization. Questions related to interpretation of the State Practice Act can be referred to: AT Section at (614) 466-3774 or board@otptat.ohio.gov

It is important to remember that any athletic trainer (AT) who clears an athlete to return to participation does so within the parameters of his/her standard operating procedures developed between the athletic trainer and team physician/physician medical director and is not making return-to-play decisions outside of the State of Ohio Athletic Training Practice Act.

The State of Ohio Athletic Training practice act states that:

“Athletic training” means the practice of prevention, recognition, and assessment of an **athletic injury** and the complete management, treatment, disposition, and reconditioning of acute athletic injuries upon a **referral**.

“**Athletic injury**” means any injury sustained by an individual that affects the individual’s participation or performance in sports, games, recreation, exercise, or other activity that requires physical strength, agility, flexibility, speed, stamina, or range of motion.

“**Referral**” is defined as a written referral from the following individuals:

- (A) An individual licensed under Chapter 4731. of the Revised Code to practice medicine and surgery;
- (B) An individual licensed under Chapter 4731. of the Revised Code to practice osteopathic medicine and surgery;
- (C) An individual licensed under Chapter 4731. of the Revised Code to practice podiatric medicine and surgery;
- (D) A dentist licensed under Chapter 4715. of the Revised Code.
- (E) A physical therapist licensed under Chapter 4755. of the Revised Code; or
- (F) A chiropractor licensed under Chapter 4734. of the Revised Code.

Referral Explanation:

Referrals from any of these healthcare professionals must be according to that profession’s Practice Act and the law must allow them to delegate such responsibilities. Therefore, an AT may make return to play decisions pertaining to concussions, and other injuries, upon referral of a Physician. Referrals may be made through a prescription written for the individual athlete, through direct communications with the referring physician, or through Standard Operating Procedures signed by the Physician.

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) - A protocol set forth by team physicians and athletic trainers for treatment or various injuries prior to evaluation by a physician. Such procedures should be followed as outlined with timely referral. This protocol must be documented and on file in the setting where used.

Standard operating procedures **DO NOT** transfer to visiting teams.



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In accordance with section 4755.60 (A) of the Ohio Revised Code, treatment consists of the techniques and procedures used in giving care in situations where assistance is required or requested. Such actions should be reasonable and prudent within the scope of practice of athletic training.

A progression of categories is listed as a guideline for your use. All treatment should be rendered in accordance with any established protocol for the venue. Physician directives should be followed at all times. Permission to treat should be obtained. Athletic trainers should not attempt any treatment measure unfamiliar to them or outside the scope of athletic training practice. Some variance may be seen in treatment, depending upon educational background, facility or setting limitations, and patient response.

A referral is not required for first aid and routine treatment. However, a referral is required for restorative treatment.

- **First Aid (no referral necessary)** - Basic, immediate care given on site to stabilize and prepare for evacuation and referral as needed.
- **Routine (no referral necessary)** - Maintenance and preventative measures commonly used by athletic trainers, such as pre-event warm-up and post-event cool-down procedures. The sole intent of treatments used is to maintain normal function during participation and daily living. For example, athletes sometimes request to be taped as a prophylactic measure or ritual for participation. Prophylactic taping is not care of an injury; it is a desire of the athlete, and does not call for the degree of skill in selection of taping method or application, as might be used by a licensed health care practitioner.
- **Restorative** - Patient specific instructions for use with a diagnosed injury or as prescribed by the referral source.

Athletic trainers may provide visiting teams, traveling without an athletic trainer or team physician, first aid/emergency care and routine care. An athletic trainer can make return to play decisions for visiting team athletes if there is no injury present. They should not provide restorative treatments or return an injured athlete or an athlete with a suspected injury to participation.

If an athletic trainer determines that the athlete has an athletic injury, then the athlete should not be returned to play. If an athlete shows any signs of concussion, then the athlete should not be returned to play at the time of the injury.

The Mission of the Ohio Athletic Trainers' Association is to advance and strengthen the profession of Athletic Training while delivering and advocating for high quality healthcare.

The American Medical Association recognizes Athletic Trainers as Allied Healthcare Professionals. Athletic trainers in Ohio are licensed by The Ohio Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy and Athletic Trainers' Board. Athletic Trainers specialize in evaluation, treatment and rehabilitation and care of injuries. Visit www.oata.org to learn more

To obtain information related to hiring athletic trainers and information related to the profession of athletic training or educational information related to youth sports safety should be directed to: president@oata.org

The Mission of the Ohio Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Athletic Trainers Board is to actively promote and protect the health of the citizens of Ohio through effective regulation of the professions of occupational therapy, physical therapy, and athletic training.

Visit otptat.ohio.gov to learn more about the role of the Ohio OTPTAT Board.