

Arizona Athletic Trainers' Association Considerations for Year Round Practice in Arizona Secondary Schools

In March of 2017, the Arizona Interscholastic Association (AIA) member schools voted to allow interscholastic sports teams to legally hold practice at any time during the year, against the recommendations of the AIA Sports Medicine Advisory Committee.

Some member schools immediately implemented this policy, causing many athletic trainers to question how this new policy would affect their job descriptions at their sites. Many ATs may have been told that this new policy would not affect their duties.

The AzATA realizes that it does not have the jurisdiction to intercede on this policy, but it does have the ability to provide some resource questions to use as a guide to our members in order to start a dialogue with school leadership. From feedback provided, these questions have caused some schools/districts to further investigate the viability, safety and liability of holding year-round practices at their respective sites.

Please use the provided questions as needed. School leadership may assume they know the responses, but the school district legal department may provide specific clarification on some items. These questions were designed to protect and provide clarification not only the AT, but they will also protect school leadership in a potentially litigious situation.

In addition, the responses should be documented. This may lead to changes in the school AT job description and/or site policies and procedures.

Year Round Practice Questions

These questions should be posed to the Athletic Director (AD) and to the Administrator overseeing Activities. Clear responses may need to come from the school (district) Legal Counsel or Risk Management team. In addition to an AT's current job description, these additions should be clarified and provided in writing for the AT. If the school has a Coaches' or Activities Handbook and/or an Athletic Training Handbook, this information should be documented in these as well.

- ***What type of documentation/paperwork must the out-of-season athlete provide to the school/coach/AT?***

- ***Will the athlete be required to have current eligibility forms on file (PPE, assumption of risk, parent consent to treat form, etc.?)***

(Unless it is a life-threatening situation, ATs should have written parent permission to provide not only emergency care, but ongoing care with student athletes. Consent to treat documents should have emergency contact information. A school's Risk Management Department may also request a current physical on file, or other documents to ensure the student athlete has been medically cleared to participate.)

- ***How is the practice schedule going to work with the ATs current scheduling?***
 - ***Are ATs supposed cover early and late out-of-season practices?***
 - ***Will ATs be responsible for covering club games and scrimmages associated with the practices?***
 - ***What will be the policy for the AT treating visiting athletes in an out-of-season situation?***
 - ***Do students have to meet the eligibility requirements to participate in the club/Parks and Rec games?***

(If ATs will be working more than their normal district-approved work hours, will they be compensated? In addition will they continue to be covered by the school's liability insurance? Will ATs have permission to treat possible visiting athletes; especially if it is not another AIA/school-specific team?)

- ***Supplies – what is the AT to provide to out-of-season sports teams/athletes?***
 - ***Coolers? Bottles? Medical kits?***
 - ***Will ATs have an increase in budget to offset those costs incurred with increased supply use?***

- *Will ATs be allowed to prioritize care based on in-season first?*

(Will out-of-season teams be charging a participation fee or club fee? An Athletic Director may question how that money will be used, and if that money could offset AT service-related costs.)

- *Will there be a time restriction/rule in place like the NCAA, in which students are only allowed so many hours of practices/games during the week? (Will any student who wants to play two sports be told to go to in-season practice then show up to out-of-season after?)*

(This could be a health and safety concern for our student athletes.)

- *Does the school district liability insurance and/or catastrophic insurance:*
 - *Cover out-of-season athletes and coaches (participating on campus and possibly off campus at activities/events)?*
 - *Will the AT be covered by the district for treating these athletes or for covering these events?*

(School district insurance policies may only cover in-season extracurricular events. Has the Risk Management team been contacted and verified that in case of incident, the district insurance policy will protect it? This would not only affect the coach and AT, but also the AD, administrative team, and the district officials.)

- *Will coaches have to adhere to AT recommendations on players playing or practicing?*
 - *What will be repercussion on coaches who play students who shouldn't be playing/participating then since they are out-of-season?*

(This could be a large issue; especially for concussions. It also raises the question of whether the district is providing liability insurance to the coach and/or catastrophic insurance to the out of season athlete.)

- ***How will out-of-season coaches be monitored?***
 - ***Will head coach be responsible for supervision and running the practice? Or will volunteers/parents/non-school associated adults be allowed to supervise?***

(This leads back to who the AT will be reporting injuries to and possible FERPA violations. In addition, if a school requires coaches have fingerprints, CPR/First Aid training, or other forms on file, who will ensure all adult supervisors are in accordance to protect the safety of the athletes?)