

## **Recognizing the Need for Athletic Trainers in the Middle School Setting**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Athletic trainers (AT) play an important role in a variety of job settings. However, one population that could greatly benefit from additional attention is the Middle School setting. A full time AT will be able to communicate and create a positive rapport with not only the athletes but the parents as well while providing competent healthcare. **PURPOSE:** To recognize the need of an athletic trainer in the middle school setting. **METHODS:** A multi-question Qualtrics survey was distributed through social media for coaches, administrators, and athletic trainers to fill out. The athletic trainers must currently work at a high school that provides care to the middle school(s) correlated with that HS or be a full-time athletic trainer at a middle school. Coaches that participated were limited to the middle school setting helping to provide insight of the day-to-day operations when working with those athletes and the type of communication they have if any with their district athletic trainer. Additional data gathered from the administrator survey will identify roadblocks to hiring athletic trainers thus providing adequate medical coverage. These participants were from Texas school districts of various classifications. The survey consisted of general questions concerning middle school medical coverage as well as questions specific to each job title. **RESULTS:** According to the data collected 89.47% answered that it would be beneficial to have an athletic trainer on campus for day-to-day operations. When comparing how many athletes a coach see per week for an injury with that coaches' level of comfort providing care an independent samples t-test was used. This revealed no statistical significance between those that saw many athletes and those that did not ( $p=0.518$ ). 92.86% of participants stated that they refer (1-5) student athletes to someone else (i.e., school nurse) on a typical school day. Administrators and coaches noted that ATs in the clinical setting provide "Another mentor in which they can foster a deeper understanding of a healthcare career pathway for students" and "Someone to evaluate, treat, and rehab other than sending the student athletes to the Doctor". They also believe that having an AT would be beneficial because of "Additional information not only for the student athletes but also for the parents and coaches as well." **CONCLUSION:** These results suggest that coaches and administrators believe it would be beneficial to have an athletic trainer on a middle school campus. The findings of this study can be utilized to help districts substantiate the need for an AT in this setting.