

Tuesday, September 8, 2020

Dear Members of the Nebraska DHHS 407 Technical Review Committee,

I am writing this letter in support of the efforts of athletic trainers in the state of Nebraska to update their practice act. In my role as Central Community College-Columbus Head Men's Basketball Coach, I have the privilege of working with great athletic trainers in Columbus, Nebraska. Each of the athletic trainers I know are actively involved and invested in the communities they serve. As such, I know that their primary professional responsibility is to serve the athletes at the schools each of them work with. However, to the point that I am trying to make, the athletic trainers that I know are more to many in the community than just the athletic trainers at the schools. They are friends, colleagues, and trusted health care professionals. We entrust them with the care for our sons, daughters, students, and teammates. At times, we trust them with input, thoughts and opinions on our care because we trust their skills, we recognize their capabilities and we value the insight that they have on medical conditions and the questions that come related to those conditions. I would like to share one personal example with the committee.

On a day in September, I was officiating a youth soccer game. I took a regular step and heard something pop. I could hardly walk but was supposed to serve as an administrator at our college soccer game. I got to the game early and asked our athletic trainer if she could take a look. She indicated that because of the limitations in her state practice act, she could not evaluate me. Doing so would violate the practice act because I was not an athlete and the guidelines she had established with her physician. She did, however, refer me to our team physician and helped set up an appointment for the next day. I ended up having surgery, and during the recovery process, I developed a blood clot. On the day that the clot was discovered, I was supposed to coach a basketball game. However, I was having horrible pain in my lower leg, so I went to our athletic trainer and explained what I was experiencing. As I explained everything, and upon seeing my leg, she insisted that I go to the ER and get it looked at. Had it not been for her training and knowledge and her ability to recognize the significance of what I was experiencing, I likely would have ignored the pain, not sought the appropriate care, and as a result of the clot, may not have been able to be here today to write this letter of support.

While it is obvious that everything worked out for the best, it concerns me that myself and others are prohibited from accessing the services of these qualified professionals simply because we may not be defined as "athletes." The injury that I had was the same injury that my players sustain, and are able to receive care for. Yet because I am not an athlete, the athletic trainer was not able to provide care beyond sending me to the doctor. While the outcome may have been the same (ie- she understood the significance of what I was experiencing and referred in both situations), in my mind, there is something wrong with the process. It is this process that the athletic trainers are seeking to modify and correct, and it is this correction in the process that I support. I ask for your support of athletic trainers in this as well.

Sincerely,  
Jerry Drymon