
Auditor's Summary

Sunset Evaluation: Regulation of Athletic Trainers

Report No. 17-08



The current registration requirement for athletic trainers should be extended beyond its current sunset date

IN REPORT NO. 17-08, *Sunset Evaluation: Regulation of Athletic Trainers*, we conclude that regulation of athletic trainers is consistent with and supported by the policy criteria for professional licensing in the Hawai'i Regulatory Licensing Reform Act, Chapter 26H, Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS). Athletic trainers are healthcare professionals who provide injury prevention, treatment and assessment of injuries, and rehabilitation of injuries, among other services. In our view, the current registration requirement for athletic trainers is reasonably necessary to protect the health and safety of athletes and others under their care. By requiring athletic trainers to be certified by the Board of Certification for Athletic Trainers (BOC), the State is ensuring that the practice of athletic training conforms with industry standards that are widely accepted by athletic trainers.



What do athletic trainers do?

Athletic trainers specialize in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of muscle and bone injuries, and are usually first at the scene to provide immediate care when athletic injuries occur. Most injuries involve strains, sprains, and bruises, though bone breaks and joint dislocations also occur.

Registration requirements and Impact

The regulatory program, established by the Legislature in 2012, requires that, to register as an athletic trainer in Hawai‘i, an applicant must have completed BOC educational and certification requirements and certified by the board. To be eligible for the BOC certification examination, applicants must graduate from a Commission Accreditation of Athletic Training Education-accredited athletic training program and demonstrate competency in injury and illness prevention, emergency care, therapeutic intervention, and health care administration. To maintain certification, athletic trainers must continue taking medically related classes and conform to a standard of professional practice.

We found that regulation is reasonably necessary because the decisions an athletic trainer makes, whether during a game, practice, or try-out, can have significant impacts on a player’s health, safety, and welfare. They are responsible for first diagnoses of injuries ranging from concussion to heat-stroke and making return-to-play/return-to-practice decisions. Athletic trainers do initial treatments such as splinting, positioning, and if needed will call 911, or an on-call physician.

We also found that the overall cost of regulation on athletic trainers is relatively minor given the profession’s impact on health and safety. Moreover, regulation is not overly exclusive in favor of Hawai‘i athletic trainers.



1,092

THE NUMBER of concussions reported by 67 Hawai‘i public and private schools during the 2016 school year. The Hawai‘i concussion education program requires that a school’s athletic trainer demonstrate competency to monitor a concussed student athlete’s return to activity.



3.5 million

The number of U.S. children ages 14 or younger that get hurt annually playing sports or participating in recreational activities.

Hawai‘i Regulatory Licensing Reform Act

The Hawai‘i Regulatory Licensing Reform Act requires the Auditor to analyze proposed regulatory measures that, if enacted, would subject unregulated professions and vocations to licensing or other regulatory controls. The policies that the Legislature adopted regarding regulation of professions and vocations are as follows:

The State may regulate professions and vocations only where reasonably necessary to protect the health, safety, or welfare of consumers, and not that of the regulated profession or vocation;

The State must regulate professions or vocations when the health, safety, or welfare of the consumer may be jeopardized by the nature of the service offered by the provider;

Evidence of abuses by providers of the service must be given great weight in determining whether regulation is desirable;

Regulation must be avoided if it will artificially increase the cost of goods and services to consumers, except in cases where this cost is exceeded by the potential danger to the consumer;

Regulation must not unreasonably restrict entry into professions and vocations by all qualified persons; and

Aggregate costs for regulation and licensure must not be less than the full costs of administering that program.