



February 22, 2021

The Honorable Ron DeSantis
State of Florida
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Governor DeSantis:

On behalf of the National Athletic Trainers' Association and the Athletic Trainers' Association of Florida, we would like to highlight the difficulties and inequity our members face concerning vaccine access. We represent more than 2000 athletic trainers in Florida licensed as health care providers under Chapter 468. As your office navigates the challenges of vaccination distribution, we appreciate the complexity of logistics and inter-association collaboration necessary to control the pandemic. Throughout the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, athletic trainers have served as front line health care workers, providing support for screening, testing, and patient care within traditional health care facilities, competitive sports environments, and in the broader community setting. Many of our members faced repetitive, direct interaction with high-risk populations as they care for patients participating in secondary school sports, whose participation does not require them to wear masks. In many cases, it has been reported that athletic trainers provide such care to these patients without the highest level of personal protective equipment available. Although athletic trainers welcome the opportunity to serve their communities, the inequity surrounding access to vaccination provides a barrier to successfully and safely do so.

Our members meet the requirements to receive COVID-19 vaccination under the current guidelines as they serve patients across the 67 counties in Florida, yet many have faced significant challenges registering and/or obtaining an appointment. The roll out of the state level virtual sign-up offers an opportunity to facilitate the process, but not all county health departments have merged their systems with the state system, resulting in additional frustration and confusion. Although we have recommended that our members reach out to their employer and their local county health departments, they have had limited success. The current processes at county levels do not identify our members as licensed health care providers or students as clinical trainees within a professional program, further complicating vaccination access for our athletic training colleagues across Florida. Athletic trainers, especially those within rural communities, unaffiliated with hospitals or clinics, and those working within secondary schools and youth sport have faced increasing difficulty identifying a path to vaccination.

We look forward to learning more about what your office can do to help alleviate barriers for athletic trainers and what can be expected of the registration process for these health care providers. Additionally, as vaccination distribution efforts expand, our members have experience working within inter-professional health care teams and can offer staffing support where needed. If your office and that of State Surgeon General Rivkees releases an emergency order elevating roles and responsibilities and allowing athletic trainers to support the vaccination efforts our members are ready to assist. A leadership team member from ATAF will be reaching out to your office in the near future to follow-up. In the meantime, if you need additional information or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Patricia Tripp, ATAF President, at president@ataf.org. We appreciate your leadership and attention to the concerns of our members regarding vaccine access.

Respectfully,

Tory R. Lindley, MA, ATC
NATA President

Patricia M. Tripp, PhD, LAT, ATC, CSCS
ATAF President