

# NATA LAUNCHES THIRD PARTY REIMBURSEMENT INITIATIVE

After a successful pilot, NATA looks to take project to the national level

By Kathryn LaLonde, NATA Athletic Trainer in Residence



The NATA Board of Directors in January establish the NATA Third Party Reimbursement Initiative (TPRI) as an extension of the Third Party Reimbursement Pilot Project.

Joe Greene, MS, ATC, who helped facilitate the pilot project from 2014-17, and continues to be a leader in the initiative, said TPRI is an effort to take what was learned from the pilot project and re-scale it on a national level. Specifically, the effort will focus on strengthening advocacy and education of payors and employers about the skillset of ATs, so that employers increasingly use ATs as billable providers and, subsequently, reimburse for the health care services that ATs provide.

“The goal of the TPRI is to advance recognition and reimbursement of autonomously billed athletic training services consistent with other allied health care providers,” Greene said. “In general, our advocacy efforts align with services delivered consistent with Medicare policy. The NATA board from a strategic standpoint, as well as a compliance standpoint, feels that aligning with [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services] policy is what we need to do in order to insure long-term progress. Therefore, this is what NATA is resourcing from a philosophic and financial perspective. When a payor specifically asks, ‘What are you asking to be reimbursed for?’ we want to indicate that we desire ATs to be reimbursed for services delivered consistent with CMS policy, and be reimbursed consistently with other allied health providers, like [physical therapists] and [occupational therapists].”

## TPRI MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM

In further support of this initiative, NATA established the TPRI Matching Grant

Program in April. With this program, states can receive matching funding up to \$10,000 annually when investing in efforts to advance third party reimbursement opportunities in their state. Greene said the money can be used in multiple ways by state associations, including hiring professional advocates with payors and employers or providing advanced educational programs and activities.

States that participate are expected to share key discoveries and data in order to support the larger network that will drive progress on the national level.

To learn more about the NATA TPRI Matching Grant Program and the application process, visit [www.nata.org/practice-patient-care/revenue-reimbursement/third-party-reimbursement-grants](http://www.nata.org/practice-patient-care/revenue-reimbursement/third-party-reimbursement-grants).

## REGIONAL COORDINATORS AND IMPLEMENTATION ASSISTANCE

In addition to the matching grant program, regional coordinators have been identified to work with the states in their assigned region. These individuals will be a key resource to help communicate efforts in as much of a standardized way as possible. The project also has identified dedicated individuals to assist employers in properly implementing autonomously billed services delivered by ATs.

## LOOKING FORWARD

As states continue to establish their support structures, the focus and emphasis will begin to shift to advocacy work with insurers, payors and legislators.

“By the end of the calendar year, we are moving into another phase of the project

where we will be working with interested states to help advocate and educate payors and employers of athletic trainers to help move our efforts forward,” Greene said. “Essentially, for those states ready to move forward from a practice act and resource perspective, we want to be able to teach them how to most effectively communicate with payors and employers, and ideally do this work in as much of a standardized process as possible.”

## CALL TO ACTION

Greene encourages athletic trainers who are interested and currently in an employment setting where their employer could use ATs as a billable provider to reach out to their state association leadership. When connecting with state association leaders, inform them that you would be interested in not only learning more, but also potentially implementing ATs in billable capacities.

“We really feel that it’s important to have states drive and lead this to the greatest extent possible right now. We will assist employers, but will also connect them back to identified state leaders in the reimbursement arena,” Greene said.

More information and resources can be found at [www.nata.org/practice-patient-care/revenue-reimbursement/billing-reimbursement](http://www.nata.org/practice-patient-care/revenue-reimbursement/billing-reimbursement). You can also learn more about the Third Party Reimbursement Pilot Project in the January 2017, June 2017 and July 2017 *NATA News*.

For additional questions, contact Greene at [joegreene@orthovise.com](mailto:joegreene@orthovise.com) or 608-220-6196.