**Sports Physical Letter**

Here is a letter from The Chiropractic Board.

Feel free to use this letter as a template and add and/or delete whatever works for your given situation.

The California Board of Chiropractic ​Examiners, ​(BCE​), position regarding chiropractors performing pre-participatory sports physicals.

The BCE is the only California regulatory agency authorized to enforce the Chiropractic Initiative Act and regulate the practice of chiropractic, as well as set standards for chiropractic education and training. It is the BCE's opinion that chiropractors are not only duly authorized to perform sports physicals as part of the chiropractic scope of practice but are also well qualified to do so.

At the core, a sports physical is a screening physical to ensure the safety of the student athlete. The argument is that chiropractors are not able to evaluate certain conditions such as cardiac and pulmonary conditions because we are not authorized to treat such conditions. This logic is deeply flawed. Chiropractors may not treat some of the conditions that they are required to evaluate for a sports physical, but that does not mean the chiropractors are not qualified to identify these conditions. Once an abnormality in one of these areas is identified these athletes can be referred for further evaluation, just as they might by their primary care medical doctor, (see Title 16 CCR​ §317 (w)).

Chiropractors are authorized under state and federal law to perform physicals more rigorous than athletic physicals to screen patients for a variety of other purposes. Chiropractors perform physicals to qualify commercial truck drivers for licensure, to examine injured workers under the workers’ compensation system, to certify disabilities for insurance purposes and to clear athletes to return to play after a concussion, (Education Code §49475). All of these examinations require more sophisticated diagnostic procedures than are required to render a history and physical for student athletes.

Commercial Drivers Physical

Both Federal (49 CFR part 300, §390.103) and California (vehicle code §12517.2) Law authorize chiropractors to perform medical examinations to screen commercial vehicle license applicants for fitness to operate heavy commercial vehicles such as school busses, trucks over 26,000 pounds, a truck towing more than one vehicle, and vehicles transporting hazardous materials.

The commercial driver examination is extremely rigorous, more comprehensive both in scope and detail than the athletic evaluation. First, the athletic evaluation is a screening, not a substitute for a comprehensive physical examination. The commercial truck driver examination, by contrast, is a “medical examination”, and the California Department of Motor Vehicles, (DMV) has deemed the process “comprehensive”. Additionally, the commercial driver examination is governed by a comprehensive and extraordinarily detailed set of federal regulations that specify 13 elaborate physical qualifications for drivers, 18 complex components of the examination, and a voluminous health history. Qualifications include visual acuity, cardiac health, blood pressure and hearing ability, among many others. Chiropractors do not treat these conditions, but are imminently qualified to evaluate these areas.

Workers’ Compensation Examinations

Chiropractors are statutorily authorized to function as independent and qualified medical examiners and disability evaluators in the workers’ compensation system, (Labor code §139.2). Both of these functions require far more sophisticated diagnostic skills than are required to render a history and physical exam for high school athletics.

Insurance Evaluations

Chiropractors are also statutorily authorized to perform physical examinations to certify disability for state disability or insurance proceedings. Similarly, these examinations require more detailed diagnostic evaluations than the student sports screenings.

Furthermore, chiropractors receive extensive training in chiropractic college regarding how to conduct physical examinations, (see title 16 CCR §331.12.2) and treat conditions in a manner consistent with chiropractic methods and teachings, (Title 16 CCR §317). This training prepares them to handle the conditions and injuries that occur most commonly with high school athletes, including:

1. Cardiac abnormalities: Chiropractors complete a battery of courses and laboratory clinics designed to provide them with a broad base of knowledge of cardiac conditions, such as anatomy, physiology, and histology covering the dissection of the human heart and study of the human cardiovascular and respiratory systems. Training in this area also includes heart sounds, valve diseases, congenital heart diseases, myocardial infarction, cardiac endocarditis and cardiac myopathies. Chiropractors are also trained in emergency procedures in how to communicate with EMS when needed.
2. Traumatic brain injuries: Significant lecture and laboratory hours in neurology, physiology, anatomy, including dissection of the human brain and pathology of traumatic brain injuries are routine components of chiropractic education.
3. Exercise-induced asthma, (EIA): Chiropractic training includes the same standard examination procedures, (inspection, percussion, palpation and auscultation) that other health care professions are taught, including an investigation for historical clues such as severity of attack, persistence or progression of symptoms, family history of allergies or known triggers that establish a high index of suspicion.
4. Musculoskeletal injuries: Procedures to diagnose, treat and refer to the appropriate health care providers, injuries common to athletics such as sprains and strains, fractures, rotator cuff tears, shoulder impingement syndrome, ankle sprains, ligament and cartilage injuries of the knee and other acute and overuse entries or standard part of chiropractic curricula.
5. Neurology: Chiropractors are trained in neurology, common nerve injuries and appropriate evaluation, diagnosis, treatment and management of such injuries. Neurology is an integral part of chiropractic education and practice.
6. Pathology: Chiropractors are taught to recognize abnormal conditions by history, signs and symptoms, (visible bleeding, wounds, bruises, distention, rigid or tender abdomen, absent bowel sound, etc), examination, (palpation, auscultation and or laboratory) of visceral, dermatological, and female conditions and make appropriate referral to medical doctors for treatment.
7. Differential diagnosis: Chiropractors are trained to evaluate different conditions with similar symptoms, both musculoskeletal and non-musculoskeletal, to render a diagnosis and possible alternate disorders.
8. Eye injuries: In conjunction with anatomy, physiology and histology coursework, the eyes, ears, nose and throat (EENT), courses teach chiropractors to recognize and diagnose common EENT conditions and to determine appropriate management; referral and or collaborative care.

Every chiropractor practice is slightly different and they may have different levels of skills, abilities and experience in the topics presented above. A thorough interview with any chiropractor will let you know if they are qualified to perform a proper sports physical.