

# Risk Matters: Physician-Patient Relationships



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With school starting back and fall sports practices commencing, many physicians and providers will be asked to perform a sports physical to provide medical clearance for student athletes to participate in sports activities. Most jurisdictions will find that even a single encounter for the limited purpose of performing a sports physical creates a physician/provider - patient relationship. Often a physician/provider who is asked to perform the physical has no prior history with the patient and limited medical information. Therefore, it is important that the physician/provider obtain a detailed history from the patient (and parent if possible) and perform a thorough exam on the student athlete. Primary areas of concern should be prior injuries, respiratory function, concussion risk, and conditions which might lead to cardiac arrest. Sports physicals should never be considered perfunctory exams. The bottom line is do not merely rubberstamp the clearance certificate, or you may be at risk of a malpractice claim.

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*attorney for legal advice, as specific legal requirements may vary from state to state and/or change over time.*