



POSITION STATEMENT

Occupational Health Professional in Healthcare Settings

The Association of Occupational Health Professionals in Healthcare supports the utilization of a designated occupational health professional in hospitals, clinics, home health agencies, long-term care facilities, and other settings which healthcare workers (HCWs) are employed. Professionals specializing in occupational health in healthcare should be given responsibility for the development and implementation of a comprehensive program to address the complex workplace health issues of HCWs. The presence of occupational health professionals promotes employee health and productivity, decreases direct and indirect costs of compensable work-related illness and injury and reduces absenteeism.

Rationale:

Occupational health services for HCWs are provided in an increasingly complex technological and regulated environment. In this setting, it is the occupational health professional who:

- assures that prevention programs for illness and injury are effective. This is accomplished through training on workplace hazards, preventive injury/illness techniques, and immunization programs.
- assures that the facility programs comply with federal, state and local regulations. There are now many occupational standards that have a major impact on healthcare workers. A rapidly increasing body of occupational standards have a major impact on HCW health and safety programs.
- develops a professional rapport with healthcare workers which enables addressing real and potential workplace problems and concerns.
- interacts with the various professionals responsible for the care of injured healthcare workers and in an active case management style assures the earliest possible return to work of injured workers.

Assures that HCWs are placed in jobs that are compatible with their physical and emotional status, to enable each worker to perform his/her job safely, efficiently and effectively.

Recommendation:

The Association advocates the presence of a designated occupational health professional in each healthcare facility that is vested with the responsibility of managing the complex occupational issues of healthcare workers. These activities must be supported by management and take place in an environment committed to the principles of occupational health.

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