

Safety

Occupational Medicine

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Occupational medicine is comprehensive, covering medical treatment for work-related injuries and illnesses, workplace health services, medical exams, and employer consultations, and is an excellent addition to any safety and health program.

Many organizations have moved toward greater utilization of occupational health providers, and the results have yielded injured employees returning to work more quickly, better communication with the medical provider, and lower cost for providing quality medical care to injured workers. Occupational health providers employ physicians, nurses, and other staff with occupational specializations, all well trained and familiar with occupational injuries, just like a physician who specializes in sports medicine. The staff is also trained to recognize injuries that are not work related.

Occupational health providers are well versed in OSHA standards and workers' compensation regulations. Most occupational health providers will meet with you to discuss the work you perform, substance abuse policies, return to work opportunities, and other services you may utilize.

Occupational health providers will diagnose an injured employee's condition, and will communicate the employee's work status promptly, usually within 24 hours. They are familiar with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996, and workers' compensation permitted uses and disclosures under HIPAA, thereby allowing better communication. The provider can help you and/or work with your workers' compensation carrier to find suitable modified-duty assignments for the injured employee. The physicians and nurse practitioners will make reasonable efforts to provide quality care while utilizing procedures or recommending a non-prescription drug which will not require an OSHA 300 Log entry. If an injured employee needs a referral to a specialist, the occupational health provider will work with your workers' compensation carrier to find the appropriate specialist.

Implementation is fairly uncomplicated. First, meet with the occupational health provider, so the provider knows your requirements for drug testing and return-to-work, and is familiar with your work. Next, instruct your supervisors to refer injured employees to the occupational health provider for medical services, and provide maps and phone numbers for the occupational health facilities. It is best if a supervisor can escort the injured employee to any medical provider, but if that is not possible, provide a map and number for the facility to the injured employee. If the injured employee requests to be seen by a physician other than the occupational health provider you have chosen, they

may. Most injured employees are very comfortable with being referred to an occupational health facility.

Most areas of Oregon and Southwest Washington have occupational health providers, many of which also work with urgent care and emergency rooms for after-hours medical care. Kaiser Permanente—an AGC member—has nine Kaiser On-the-Job® occupational health facilities in the Portland, Salem, and Southwest Washington areas. Kaiser On-the-Job® services are provided to both Kaiser members and non-members. Providence Health Plans and Concentra also provide occupational health services.

Other services available through occupational health providers are:

- ◆ Medical screening and surveillance
- ◆ Respirator certifications
- ◆ DOT/CDL physicals
- ◆ Pre-placement exams
- ◆ Return-to-work evaluations
- ◆ Asbestos screening
- ◆ Lead biological screening
- ◆ HazMat exams
- ◆ Substance abuse testing
- ◆ Federal and non-federal drug testing
- ◆ Pre-placement, post accident, random/reasonable suspicion

Please contact your AGC safety and loss control consultant for assistance or more information on occupational medicine.