



ASSOCIATION
OF OCCUPATIONAL
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS
IN HEALTHCARE

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STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

Vision

The Association of Occupational Health Professionals in Health Care (AOHP) is the defining authority shaping healthcare workers health, safety, and well-being.

Mission

AOHP is dedicated to promoting the health, safety, and well-being of workers in healthcare. This is accomplished through:

- Advocating for employee health and safety.
- Occupational health education and networking opportunities.
- Health and safety advancement through best practice and research.
- Partnering with employers, regulatory agencies and related associations.

Introduction

These standards are intended to be the foundation to guide the Occupational Health Professional (OHP) in practice or oversight of an OHP practice within health care. The standards are intentionally broad to better guide those in various roles within and across organizations.

Standard #1 – Professional Development

The occupational health professional (OHP) in healthcare takes advantage of evidence-based educational and professional growth and research opportunities not only to meet legal and professional licensure obligations, but to advance knowledge to provide excellence to the profession. AOHP encourages self-direction to seek educational opportunities.

Rationale: Expertise in current evidence-based occupational health practices is necessary to demonstrate competency as an OHP.

Objectives:

- Participate in programs that enhance professional development.
- Participate in annual national conference.
- Seek out scholarship opportunities for research and education.
- Seek educational opportunities appropriate to level of practice.
- Foster collaboration through professional networking and resources.
- Pursue certifications appropriate to practice such as occupational health nursing, safety, case management and infection control to establish expertise in the field.
- Participate in research activities consistent with level of practice.

Standard #2 – Legal and Ethical Issues

The OHP has a legal and ethical obligation to protect the rights of the employee, to assist in protecting the employer from litigation and regulatory penalties, and to practice with honesty and integrity in fulfilling professional, legal and regulatory duties and requirements. The OHP also acts as an advocate for the employee to ensure equal access to occupational health services. The OHP follows industry standards of practice and regulatory guidance in his or her clinician role. The OHP also serves as an adviser to leadership in providing a safe and healthy work environment for healthcare workers. AOHP supports an open communication and a door, non-punitive reporting process when conflicts arise.

Rationale: Ethics-driven practice protects the best interest of both the employees and the organization served by the OHP.

Objectives:

- Observe high standards of ethics in conducting business and personal duties and responsibilities.
- Safeguard confidential information in accordance with the law.
- Accept societal obligations as a professional and community member.
- Maintain individual competence in occupational health.
- Accept responsibility for individual judgments and actions.
- Identify and resolve ethical dilemmas; seeking counsel when needed.
- Pursue educational growth and development related to legal, regulatory and ethical issues.
- Provide uniform healthcare services based on workplace hazard assessments in the work environment for all healthcare workers.
- Promote collaboration with professionals within the OH discipline and within the community.
- Avoid/reveal conflict of interest situations when collaborating within and outside the workplace.

Standard #3 – Management/Administration

The OHP in healthcare effectively assumes a responsible role for monitoring and influencing the occupational health of workers. The OHP takes a leadership role in serving as a resource and adviser to management as needed to assist them in protecting and promoting the health, safety and well-being of the workers within the organization.

Rationale: The OHP develops a practice consistent with the culture, mission and business goals – as well as the related health and safety needs – of the healthcare organization.

Objectives:

- Acknowledge that OHPs are leaders in their respective workplace and communities regardless of title.
- Contribute to the overall health, safety and well-being of the workforce.
- Recognize and address diversity needs of the workforce.
- Initiate goal development and program planning.
- Collaborate with management on implementation of goals and programs.
- Implements comprehensive programs and systems supporting the occupational health, safety and well-being of healthcare workers.
- Implement policy and procedure protocols.
- Implement and maintain quality improvement and cost containment programs.
- Develop and maintain regulatory compliance documents.
- Educate management and employees regarding safety, health, and well-being.
- Collect, analyze and summarize occupational health data (local/globally) to determine value of services provided for individual locations for which he or she is responsible, as well as the overall healthcare organization.
- Articulates to management the implications of the data collected and the value of the service provided.
- Evaluate achievement of goals and objectives.

Standard #4 – Clinical Practice

The OHP provides assessment, diagnosis and develops plans of care consistent with level of practice and the practice setting according to nationally recognized evidenced-based occupational health principals. Clinical practice scope and responsibility depend on the size and type of organization and the OHP role within that organization.

Rationale: The OHP provides clinical expertise appropriate to the scope of practice and setting and according to evidenced-based occupational health principals.

Objectives:

- Utilizes nationally accepted evidenced-based medicine treatment guidelines as a basis for practice.
- Develops internal evidence-based clinical practice guidelines.

- Emphasizes prevention and early intervention.
- Develops and provides self-care coaching and motivational interviewing.
- Incorporates changes in accepted evidenced-based medicine treatment guidelines into clinical practices when they occur.

Standard #5 – Occupational Case Management and Collaboration

The OHP collaborates at all levels within the health care organization to ensure the safety, well-being and fitness for duty of the workforce. The type and degree of responsibility is dependent on the size and type of organization and the OHP role within that organization. The OHP helps to assure the employee receives the right care, at the right time and at a reasonable cost.

Rationale: The OHP provides monitoring and follow-up of health problems, and sets standards to evaluate and improve the services provided.

Objectives:

- Collaborate with other healthcare professionals to identify and develop best practices.
- Emphasize comprehensive care and early intervention.
- Develop and provide wellness strategies and counseling.
- Implement written protocols in accordance with legal requirements.
- Implement procedures for monitoring goals and objectives and document evidence of fiscal responsibility.
- Develop motivational interviewing and other skills to influence changes in worker knowledge and attitudes regarding health.
- Manage work-related injuries with an emphasis on prevention.
- Maintain accurate healthcare records.
- Develop and evaluate goals, programs, systems and outcomes that contribute to organizational efficiency.

Standard #6 – Community Affiliation, Partnerships and Collaboration

AOHP strongly advocates OHP participation in community groups and organizations that support the OHP. This support increases the effectiveness of occupational healthcare for all healthcare workers. This may be done through a professional organization or on an individual basis.

Rationale: Community involvement provides a basis for strong alliances for the care and support of the working public.

Objectives:

- Seek information/knowledge regarding community, environmental, governmental issues and trends that might impact occupational health.
- Support community health activities.
- Join community health organizations.
- Collaborate with environmental, emergency and other public services.
- Initiate visits to government or community representatives.
- Advocate concerning legislation that may affect practice.

References

American Nurses Association. (2010). Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice (2nd edition). Silver Spring, MD

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Salazar, Mary K. (Ed), (2006). Core Curriculum for Occupational and Environmental Health Nursing, (3rd edition). American Association of Occupational Health Nurses, Inc. Mosby, Inc.

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