

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 7, 2015

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AOHP Announces Position Statement on Respiratory Protection for Healthcare Workers

PITTSBURGH — As the national leader for occupational health in healthcare, the Executive Board of Directors for the Association of Occupational Health Professionals in Healthcare (AOHP) recently adopted a new position statement on Respiratory Protection for Healthcare Workers.

Ensuring the health and safety of healthcare workers is the primary function of the occupational health professional (OHP) in healthcare. The position statement identifies respiratory protection as a critical area of competence for the OHP. Respiratory protection programs led by competent staff, including OHPs, are for healthcare workers who treat patients in isolation with airborne precautions. In addition, emerging infectious diseases such as Ebola have demonstrated the importance of healthcare workers being skilled in the use of PPE including respiratory protection.

"Building the respiratory protection competence of OHPs and frontline healthcare workers will better equip healthcare to be prepared for any airborne illness," says AOHP Executive President Dee Tyler, RN, COHN-S, FAAOHN. "AOHP supports training strategies that promote the proper use of PPE, and AOHP will continue to advocate for and participate in national efforts that build a culture of safety in healthcare."

The position statement highlights AOHP's ongoing efforts to encourage the implementation of effective respiratory protection programs in hospitals and better training on the proper use of PPE. AOHP was a member of an inter-professional advisory group formed in response to a 2011 report by the Institute of Medicine regarding OHPs and respiratory protection, whose work led to the development of Respiratory Protection Competencies for OHPs. AOHP also collaborates with and supports the work of a number of other national organizations regarding respiratory protection initiatives, including the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and The Joint Commission (TJC).

AOHP is recognized as the definitive resource for issues related to workers in the healthcare setting and holds the exclusive mission of addressing the needs and concerns of OHPs in healthcare. AOHP has developed position statements on a variety of issues:

- Confidentiality of Employee Health Records
- Influenza Vaccination of Healthcare Workers
- Injury and Illness Prevention Programs

- Occupational Health Professionals in Healthcare Settings
- Safe Patient Handling
- Standards for Adult Immunization Practice

AOHP represents thousands of healthcare workers across the nation and beyond with a vision to be the defining resource and leading advocate for occupational health and safety in healthcare. AOHP promotes health, safety and well-being for healthcare workers through: advocating for employee health and safety; occupational health education and networking opportunities; health and safety advancement through best practice and research; and partnering with employers, regulatory agencies and related associations.

For more information, please call AOHP Headquarters at 800-362-4347, or e-mail info@aohp.org. AOHP's position statements, including Respiratory Protection for Healthcare Workers, are located on the AOHP Web page at <http://aohp.org/aohp/TOOLSFORYOURWORK/PositionStatements.aspx>.

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