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## **AOHP Releases 2017-2019 Public Policy Statement**

WARRENDALE, PA — On behalf of healthcare workers across the nation and beyond, the Association of Occupational Health Professionals in Healthcare (AOHP) has released its 2017-2019 Public Policy Statement, which specifically targets health and safety concerns in healthcare. These key areas of focus for AOHP for the next two years were identified by the 2017 AOHP membership survey and needs assessment, and through the partnerships that AOHP has developed with other stakeholders. Highlights of the AOHP 2017-2019 Public Policy Statement include:

### **Overall Healthcare Worker Safety and Health**

Healthcare workers experience some of the highest rates of non-fatal occupational injuries and illnesses. Therefore, AOHP supports efforts to reduce and eliminate occupational hazards in the healthcare setting. AOHP supports the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) core elements of a successful safety and health management system and is collaborating with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) on its total Worker Health initiative and the National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) Healthcare and Social Assistance Sector Council.

### **Occupational Health Professional Development**

Professional development is vital to AOHP in demonstrating expertise and promoting recognition of the valuable role occupational health plays in high quality care delivery. AOHP promotes the advancement of employee/ occupational health professionals and cultivates professional expertise by offering: a national conference with varied learning levels (beginner, intermediate and advanced); local chapter educational programs; mentoring; and professional development through the Congress of Presidents and initiatives of the national Executive Board.

### **Building Partnerships**

AOHP works collaboratively with invested stakeholders toward achieving the goal of a safe and healthy work environment. Partners include The Joint Commission's Nursing Advisory Council, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), NIOSH, NORA Healthcare and Social Assistance Sector, American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, and other accrediting agencies and nursing associations.

### **Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure**

AOHP advocates for a more secure environment for employees regarding blood and body fluid exposures through the use of safer technology, education, training and prevention efforts. In 2012, to address the lack of a national database of sharps injuries, AOHP developed EXPO-S.T.O.P., an annual survey instrument used to ascertain blood exposure incidence and denominator data. Best practices identified through EXPO-S.T.O.P. are being shared in an effort to decrease significant exposures. AOHP also

supports the CDC's recommendation for HIV testing in healthcare settings, with HIV screenings included in general consent for medical care upon notification.

### **Safe Patient Handling**

AOHP encourages efforts to ensure a safer healthcare environment for both patients and employees, including utilizing lift/assist devices as the primary method for the prevention of musculoskeletal injuries. AOHP advocates for regulations, legislation, education, training, research and prevention regarding safer patient handling activities and methodologies and works to influence both state and national legislation as it relates to safe patient handling.

### **Influenza**

In 2011, AOHP first published its position statement on influenza vaccination for healthcare workers. AOHP continues to endorse efforts to provide influenza vaccine, free of charge, to healthcare workers on an annual basis and support continuing research efforts to develop evidenced-based best practices related to influenza transmission in the healthcare environment and vaccination of healthcare workers. In addition, AOHP will seek opportunities to evaluate the tracking of worker influenza vaccination rates as they become available through the CDC's National Healthcare Safety Network.

### **Respiratory Protection**

AOHP promotes increased research, training and education related to respiratory protection from tuberculosis and other airborne respiratory transmissible diseases. The association strongly supports national efforts to scientifically determine the need for annual fit testing, as well as the need for training and education regarding respiratory protection. AOHP has collaborated with The Institute of Medicine's Respiratory Advisory Group and The Joint Commission's Technical Expert Panel in the development of respiratory protection competencies and effective implementation strategies for health professionals and maintains an ongoing relationship with the National Personal Protective Technology Lab in Pittsburgh.

### **Workplace Violence**

Healthcare workers sustain workplace violence injuries at a rate more than four times higher than employees in the private sector. AOHP supports and encourages healthcare organizations to endeavor to protect patients, employees and visitors from acts of workplace violence by implementing comprehensive violence prevention programs that are risk specific to the healthcare organization or facility, as well as continuing research on prevention strategies for workplace violence. AOHP recently responded to OSHA's Request for Information regarding the possible development of a workplace violence standard.

### **About AOHP**

AOHP is a national association representing thousands of healthcare workers whose vision is 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 email [info@aohp.org](mailto:info@aohp.org). The complete AOHP Public Policy 2017-2019 document can be viewed online at <http://www.aohp.org/aohp/TOOLSFORYOURWORK/Regulatory.aspx>.

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