Occupational Health Professional's Services

- Identify potential hazards and find ways to prevent, eliminate, minimize, or reduce hazards.
- Develop and manage training programs to promote workplace health and safety.
- Maintain OSHA recordkeeping forms and workers' compensation files.
- Provide medical screening related to specific chemicals or exposures, including preplacement (post-offer) physical examinations, job placement assessments, periodic examinations, and maintenance of individual employee medical records as required by OSHA.
- Manage and/or treat work-related illnesses and injuries, with emphasis on early recognition and intervention; and follow-up and monitor workers as they return to work.
- Develop and implement health promotion programs.
- Provide guidance for case management of employees who have prolonged or complex illnesses and injuries.

Delivery of Occupational Health Care

Small employers, or those with limited resources, might share the services of health care professionals within a business or industrial park, or contract with a larger firm whose occupational health service includes an occupational health care professional as part of its total safety and health program.

Qualified Occupational Health Care Professionals

Physicians

Medical Doctors (MDs):

- Have completed 4 years of study at the college level and then 4 years of training at an accredited school.
- Licensed MDs have passed the National Medical Board Exam or equivalent examinations and have a license to practice within a given state(s).

Doctors of Osteopathy (DOs):

- Graduate from college and an osteopathic school approved by the American Osteopathic Association.
- Must pass a state board examination to qualify for a license to practice within a given state(s).

Occupational Medicine Physicians:

- MDs or DOs who have completed additional occupational medicine training or acquired onsite experience.
- Completion of additional residency training and further practice in occupational medicine enables physicians to pursue certification in occupational medicine after meeting rigorous qualifying standards and passing exam given by the American Board of Preventive Medicine (ABPM).

Qualified Occupational Health Care Professionals (cont'd)

Registered Nurses

Registered Nurses (RNs):

- Receive from 2 to 4 years of training and education at the college level and graduate from a state-approved school of nursing.
- They pass a state board examination and are granted a license to practice within a given state(s).

Occupational Health Nurses (OHNs):

- Registered nurses with experience and additional education in occupational health.
- Certified occupational health nurses (COHNs) obtain certification from the American Board for Occupational Health Nurses after meeting rigorous qualifying educational and experience standards and successfully passing an occupational health nursing examination.

Qualified Occupational Health Care Professionals (cont'd)

Nurse Practitioners (NPs):

- RNs licensed in their state and have completed formal advanced education, increasingly at the master's level.
- In most states, they are certified for advanced practice by the American Nurses Association or specialty nursing organizations.
- Independently perform many health evaluation and care activities, including physical exams, common diagnostic and laboratory tests, and treatment of employees who are ill or injured.
- Can prescribe certain medications in most states and perform other medical activities using written protocols developed collaboratively with a physician.

Physician Assistants

Physician Assistants (PAs):

- Provide services under the direction and supervision of a MD or DOs.
- May perform physical examinations, identify health problems, and plan therapeutic interventions.
- Usually required to complete a 2-year educational program at the bachelor's or master's degree level.

Other Health Care Providers

Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurses (LPN/LVNs):

- Graduate from a program of practical nursing and must pass the state board examination.
- Licensed by the state to perform certain specific health care activities, under the direct supervision of a physician or registered nurse.

Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs)/Paramedics:

- EMTs are pre-hospital providers trained to provide specific and limited emergency care.
- EMTs are authorized to perform their duties by standing orders or protocols from physicians.
- Respond primarily to injuries and acute illnesses on a temporary basis and are not independently licensed to provide other medical care.
- Some EMTs receive advanced training to become paramedics.

How to Verify the Scope of Practice for Health Care Professionals in the Licensing State

Medical Doctor

- State boards of medical examiners and professional licensure can provide information about an occupational physician's educational training and type of practice.
- The American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) publishes an annual list of certified occupational medicine specialists available in most public libraries.

Doctor of Osteopathy

- Licensed by a board in each state.
- Listings may include Board of Medical Examiners, Licensing Examiners, Board of Osteopathic Examiners, Board of Medical Practice, or Medical Licensing Board of (name of particular state).
- The American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) publishes an annual list of certified occupational medicine specialists (See M.D. listing above).

Registered Nurse and Nurse Practitioner

- The state board of nursing in each state is listed in the telephone directory and defines the scope of practice issues for RNs and NPs.
- The American Nurses Association (ANA) certifies NPs.
- The American Board for Occupational Health Nurses (ABOHN) certifies RNs in the specialty of occupational health.

How to Verify the Scope of Practice for Health Care Professionals in the Licensing State (cont'd)

Physician Assistant

- The legal scope of practice for PAs varies from state to state. Most states require licensure or certification.
- PAs are certified by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA).
- All scope of practice issues for PAs should be addressed to the State Board of Medicine or The NCCPA.

Emergency Medical Technician

- The EMT's scope of practice varies from state to state.
- There are several practice levels of EMTs each determined by the number of hours of training and the range of procedures authorized.
- Each state has a director of EMTs listed in the telephone directory under State Government. The appropriate office may be contacted under the telephone directory subheading listed as either the Department of Health, Department of Public Health, or Department of Emergency Medical Services.

Licensed Vocational/Practical Nurse

- The state board of nursing in each state is listed in the telephone directory and defines the scope of practice issues for LVNs/LPNs.

What Qualifications Should an Employer Look for in an Occupational Health Care Professional?

- General knowledge of the work environment, including worksite operations; familiarity with the toxic properties of materials used by employees as well as the potential hazards and stressors of work processes and jobs or tasks.
- Ability to determine an employee's physical and emotional fitness for work.
- Ability to recognize, evaluate, treat, and/or refer occupational illnesses and injuries.
- Knowledge of workers' compensation laws; local, state and federal regulatory requirements; and systems for maintaining health records.
- Ability to organize and manage the delivery of health care services.
- Knowledge of legal and ethical issues related to occupational health care practice.

How to Evaluate the Qualifications of an Occupational Health Care Professional

During the interview process, the following kinds of questions and issues are appropriate to evaluate prospective occupational health care professionals:

- What type of education/training does the candidate have?
  - Note graduation date and all degrees and type of specialty certification;
  - Titles of continuing education courses taken in the last 2 years;
  - Where and when licensed, registered, or certified (ask for documentation); and
  - Years of experience in occupational health.
- In what type of industries has the candidate had experience?
- What kind of management experience(s) has the candidate had? For how long?
- What does the candidate know about OSHA recordkeeping requirements?
- Has the candidate ever prepared for and/or participated in an OSHA inspection?
- Does the candidate know about workers' compensation laws in your state?

How to Evaluate the Qualifications of an Occupational Health Care Professional (cont'd)

- Is the candidate familiar with the Americans with Disabilities Act?
- What kind of information does the candidate want to know about your business?
- How can the candidate develop or improve your safety and health program?
- You should expect the candidate to ask about the following:
  - facilities (type, location)
  - number of employees
  - work processes
  - known or potential hazards
  - application of standards and/or regulations
  - current method of providing occupational health care services
  - other health care providers involved in providing services
  - existence and specifics of a safety and health program
  - medical surveillance programs
  - collective bargaining contracts
  - previous OSHA citations
- References from current/previous employers or educational institutions should be requested.

Other Occupational Safety and Health Professionals

Industrial Hygiene

- Industrial hygiene focuses on the identification and control of occupational health hazards arising as a result of or during work.
- The industrial hygienist (IH) focuses on the recognition, evaluation, and control of chemical, biological, or physical factors or stressors arising from the workplace, that may cause sickness, impaired health and well-being, or significant discomfort and inefficiency among workers or in the community.
- Professional industrial hygienists possess either a baccalaureate or master's degree in engineering, chemistry, biology, physics, or industrial hygiene. Certified Industrial Hygienists (CIHs) have passed a rigorous qualifying examination.
- The IH monitors and uses analytical methods to detect the extent of occupational chemical, biological, or physical exposure and implements engineering controls and work practices to correct, reduce, or eliminate workplace hazards.
- IH's can give expert opinion as to the magnitude of chemical, biological, or physical exposure, and the degree of associated risk.

Other Occupational Safety and Health Professionals (cont'd)

Industrial Engineering

- Industrial engineering is the design, installation, and improvement of integrated systems of people, material, information, equipment, and energy.
- Industrial engineering draws upon specialized knowledge and skills in the mathematical, physical, and social sciences, together with principles and methods of engineering analysis and design to specify, predict, and evaluate the results obtained from such systems.
- The Institute of Industrial Engineers has a special division devoted to ergonomics, and many industrial engineers elect to receive advanced training in this increasingly complex and growing specialty.

Certified Safety Professional

- Generally, Certified Safety Professionals (CSPs) graduate from accredited college or university programs with a baccalaureate or master's degree in safety and must have at least 4 years of professional safety experience prior to taking the Safety Fundamentals exam.
- CSPs focus on developing procedures, standards, or systems to achieve the control or reduction of hazards and exposures that would be detrimental to people, property, and/or the environment.