



**Western Occupational & Environmental Medical Association**  
A Component Society of the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine

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**WOEMA Advocacy / Legislative Agenda for 2011**

*Approved by the WOEMA Board of Directors, January 23, 2011*

The Western Occupational and Environmental Medical Association (WOEMA) is an organization of nearly 600 physicians and other health care specialists who champion the health and safety of workers, workplaces, and the environment. WOEMA is a regional component of the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM), our national medical association headquartered near Chicago, Illinois, and comprising about 4,500 members nationally.

Occupational Medicine physicians are experts in issues where work affects workers' health, or where workers' health affects the workplace, including care of workers' injuries and illnesses under Workers' Compensation, risk assessments related to toxic chemicals and other pollutants, management of confidential medical information, assessing fitness for duty before and during employment, and workplace preventive services aimed at improving health and productivity.

In addition to its educational and service functions, WOEMA is dedicated to legislative and regulatory advocacy in our five member states (Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, and Utah). We recognize the need for more effective laws and regulations in a number of areas related to occupational and environmental health. In particular, WOEMA is dedicated to the following advocacy goals:

1. **Universal health coverage for the American workforce:** WOEMA will promote policies at both the state and national level, to make quality affordable healthcare available to all American workers.
2. **Promote quality in Occupational Medicine services:** Occupational Medicine services delivered to workers, including injury care and preventive care, should be continuously improved through adherence to evidence-based Practice Guidelines and through better alignment of financial incentives with medical quality metrics.
3. **Widespread availability of workplace preventive services:** The workplace is an efficient and effective site for the delivery of clinical preventive services, including health promotion services. WOEMA will promote policies for appropriate payment for such services, for improved medical record storage and transmission compatible with a Medical Home model, and for implementation of personal health incentives as contained in the Health Care Reform bill, and compatible with firewall requirements of GINA (Genetic Information and Non-Discrimination Act).
4. **Improved OSHA Standards** (both Federal and state OSHA programs): WOEMA will promote improved OSHA Standards, to expand the role of Occupational Medicine physicians in OSHA compliance, and in preventive planning for health and safety in workplaces. In particular, WOEMA will continue to advocate for improved OSHA Standards on Hazard Communication, Injury and Illness Prevention Programs, occupational lead exposure, and other workplace exposures potentially requiring medical surveillance of workers.

5. **Enhanced funding for Graduate Medical Education in the field of Occupational and Environmental Medicine.** WOEMA will advocate for additional resources for Occupational Medicine residencies, and will promote public-private partnerships to increase the training of Occupational Medicine physicians and other occupational health professionals. WOEMA supports increasing the supply of Board Certified Occupational Medicine Physicians through mid-career residencies operating under the newly opened Complementary Pathway.
6. **Promote Health and Productivity Management (HPM) Programs:** WOEMA favors the adoption of implementing regulations for PP-ACA (the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act), including tax incentives or other initiatives, which would encourage the widespread adoption of Health and Productivity Management (HPM) Programs in workplaces, together with mechanisms to assure reasonable payment to physicians who provide these services.
7. **A healthy and sustainable “Built Environment”:** WOEMA supports land use policies, chemical and technology policies, and community planning practices to promote a healthful and sustainable “built environment.”
8. **Progress on global climate change:** WOEMA supports initiatives to decrease the release of greenhouse gases, and to improve the monitoring of indicators of global climate change.
9. **Wider use of electronic medical records in Occupational Medicine Practice:** WOEMA supports effective incentives for the adoption of electronic medical records in Occupational Medicine practice, including electronic reporting and billing in the area of Workers’ Compensation care.
10. **Equitable fee schedules for primary care Occupational Medicine services:** WOEMA supports regulations leading to fair fee schedules for Occupational Medicine practice, aimed at reflecting and rewarding the special expertise that Occupational Medicine specialists possess in the area of disability assessment and management.
11. **Appropriate Medical Credentialing:** WOEMA will remain alert to threats to medical quality arising from inappropriate credentialing of medical providers who may not have the skills or knowledge to deliver occupational services to the American workforce.
12. **Adequate physician staffing in our States' agencies related to Occupational Health:** WOEMA supports adequate staffing of key positions in state and local government agencies, related to Occupational Safety and Health. In particular, WOEMA believes that medical leadership is critically important in state agencies that deal with workers’ compensation, occupational health and safety, and health care delivery in workplaces.
13. **Development of better epidemiologic databases related to Workers’ Comp medical practice:** WOEMA is aware that our society lacks an adequate epidemiologic database to improve medical outcomes by linking them to process standards, including those contained in Practice Guidelines. Because the opportunities for improved quality outcomes and improved cost containment are so great, WOEMA favors expansion of reporting requirements by workers’ compensation insurers and others to develop a robust epidemiologic database in our member states.
14. **Improved delivery of workers’ compensation services to low wage workers:** WOEMA is aware of recent studies indicating troubling and widespread patterns of labor injustice for low wage workers, and will promote improved regulations to insure uniform and just treatment of workers injured on the job.
15. **Improved surveillance of workplace risks through the use of multiple available sources:** WOEMA supports the use of multiple databases, such as existing HazMat inventories, to monitor potentially hazardous chemical exposures in workplaces, and where necessary the adoption of new laws or regulations to streamline the use of such databases by public health agencies.