

## **Worker's Compensation Parity for Physician Assistants**

### Problem:

Many of Oregon's workers see a physician assistant (PA) as their primary health care provider. This is especially true in rural regions of the state where there is a consistent shortage of health care providers. For those workers, a disparity exists in how they can be treated for workers compensation related issues. Currently, PAs are categorized as Type B attending physicians when it comes to treating workers compensation injuries. This means that they, along with chiropractors and naturopaths, are only allowed to treat patients for 60 consecutive days or 18 visits from the initial visit date, despite being the primary care provider for that patient. For patients visiting these providers, once the allotted number of days or visits have passed, they must see a new provider to continue their treatment. This can mean visiting a new clinic or even traveling to a new town.

Alternatively, medical doctors (MDs) and osteopathic physicians (DOs) are classified as Type A attending physicians and are allowed to treat patients for however long and however many visits are needed. This difference in classification creates a disparity in access for the injured workers who typically see a PA rather than an MD or DO, especially in the regions of Oregon with limited numbers of health care providers.

In addition to reducing access to treatment for Oregon's workers, this categorization runs counter to a PA's practice agreement, which stipulates that PAs may practice any medical service necessary so long as it is included in that agreement.

### Desired outcome:

OPSA is seeking parity with MDs and DOs as a Type A attending physician, with the ability to treat patients as frequently as needed, for whatever duration is needed, so long as the treatment of worker compensation patients is included in a PA's practice agreement. This parity will remove the requirement that injured workers see multiple providers, increasing access to worker's compensation treatment and allowing for Oregon's injured workers to receive the care they need to get back to work from their primary care PA.

### Proposed statutory fix:

Include physician assistants as a category of Type A physician in the worker's comp definitions (ORS 656.005(12)(b)) along with physicians, podiatric physicians and surgeons, and oral and maxillofacial surgeons.