

# Oregon Ombudsman for Injured Workers Annual Report, CY 2010

Information Management Division

Department of Consumer & Business Services

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## Introduction

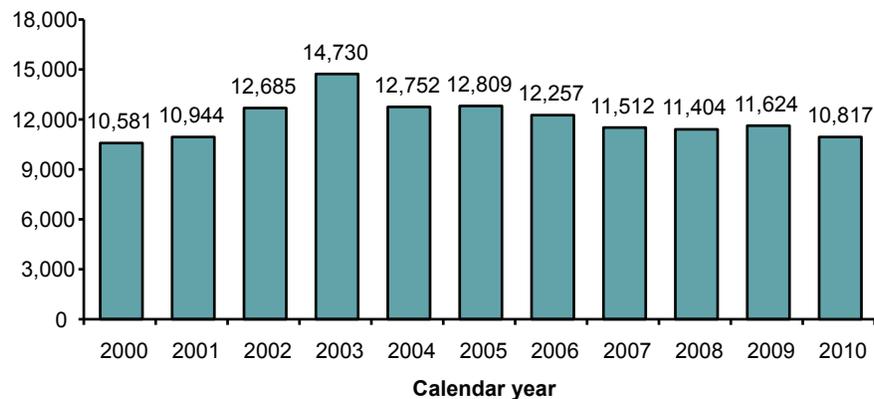
The Office of the Ombudsman for Injured Workers (OIW) is an independent advocate for Oregon injured workers. The OIW helps injured workers understand their rights and responsibilities, investigates complaints, and works to resolve those complaints. The OIW also provides training and outreach to injured workers and stakeholders to improve awareness of OIW services and to ensure that workers needing help have access to those services regardless of language, disability, or other barriers.

The Legislature established the OIW in 1987. The director of the Department of Consumer and Business Services, with the Governor's concurrence, appoints the ombudsman. The ombudsman supervises a staff of seven.

## Inquiries and contacts

The OIW closed 10,817 inquiries (requests for information, advice, or assistance) in 2010 (see graph, nearby), 6.9 percent fewer than in 2009. The worker initiated about 87.5 percent of the inquiries, a percentage that's slightly smaller than the values for 2000-2009. About 90.5 percent of inquiries were made by telephone. Non-English speakers made about 26.2 percent of inquiries, about the same percentage as in 2009. Some 73.4 percent of inquiries required no additional contacts to be resolved; the remaining 26.6 percent of inquiries required an average of 2.8 subsequent contacts for resolution. The total number of contacts, including those that originated the inquiries, was 18,934 (6.0 percent more than in 2009 and the most since 2006).

OIW inquiries, 2000-2010



## Issues

There were 16,020 issues addressed in the 10,817 inquiries (Table 1), an average of about 1.5 issues per inquiry. The most frequent issues have been much the same from year to year, especially in recent years. For 2010, the most frequent issues (in order of decreasing count) were (1) general claim process, (2) medical services or bills, (3) accurate and timely benefits, (4) acceptance-denial, and (5) litigation. In both 2008 and 2009, the top five issues were the same ones, and in the same order. The top five issues (of 18 possible issues) constituted 59 percent of the issues in inquiries closed in 2010.

**Table 1. Issues by decreasing count, 2010**

Issue	Count
General claim process	2,591
Medical services, bills, problems	2,469
Accurate/timely benefits	1,824
Accept/deny	1,467
Litigation, including settlements	1,146
Filing worker's comp. claims	920
Employer issues, problems	884
Closure and reconsideration	807
CDA general inquiry**	649
Return to work	594
CDA OIW required*	501
Other issues	479
Attorney problems	447
Aggravation	424
Independent medical exam	280
Insurer issue or problem	247
Vocational assistance	194
Unknown issue	74
Permanent total disab./fatal	23
<b>Total issues:</b>	<b>16,020</b>

\* Insurer or WCB refers worker to OIW.

\*\* Issue first recorded in October 2005.

CDA is claim disposition agreement.

## Timeliness, assistance, and referrals

The OIW responded to 99.3 percent of inquiries within two days. It completed about 82.0 percent of inquiries the same day, and 91.5 percent within two days. The OIW provided assistance beyond basic information in 25.7 percent of inquiries (Table 2), above the 2001-2009 average of 20.9 percent. In about 3.5 percent of inquiries, the OIW referred the inquirer to another agency. About 65.8 percent of these referrals were to the Bureau of Labor and Industries.

**Table 2. Type of service provided, 2005-2010**

Type	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Provide information	75.2%	76.9%	79.2%	79.1%	77.0%	74.3%
Provide assistance*	24.8%	23.1%	20.8%	20.9%	23.0%	25.7%

Percentages exclude inquiries where the worker could not be reached (usually about 0.5 percent of inquiries).\* The OIW advocates on behalf of the worker to reach a resolution, or additional contacts are required to provide specific information.

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