

## ***Indicator 7: Musculoskeletal Disorders Reported by Employers (Unable to Report)***

### **Significance<sup>i</sup>**

Work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSD) and injuries affect the muscles, tendons, nerves, ligaments, joints or spinal discs and significantly impact the ability of workers to perform their jobs. Work activities that contribute to these injuries include repetitive motion, placing hands or limbs in awkward positions, using equipment that vibrates and handling heavy objects. Work-related MSDs can be prevented through the identification and control of occupational hazards and the implementation of safety procedures.

### **Methods**

This indicator is calculated using data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses (SOII), an employer based survey of workplace injuries. The SOII is the only comprehensive measure of work-related injuries and illnesses in American workplaces. As such, employers, employees, public policy makers and researchers rely on these data in their efforts to protect and maintain the high level of productivity of the American workforce. Colorado does not participate in the BLS SOII; thus, state-level data for this indicator are not available.

<http://www.bls.gov/respondents/iif/home.htm>

Data for this indicator are characterized using the Occupational Injury and Illness Classification System (OIICS) codes, which are not utilized by the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Division of Workers' Compensation, to classify injuries. Thus, data on this measure are not currently available through Colorado's workers' compensation (WC) system.

### **Recommendations and Next Steps**

- Continue to explore opportunities for Colorado to participate in the BLS SOII, which requires a state-resource match to federal funds. (See Indicator #1 Recommendations for additional information about SOII participation.)
  - NOTE: The Colorado DOLE reports work-place injuries by body part and nature of injury in the annual *Work-Related Injuries in Colorado* reports. The DOLE also produces an annual report on Workers' Compensation costs by nature of injury.<sup>ii</sup> These reports routinely showcase strain injuries (e.g., MSD) as the largest contributor to both the total number of workplace injuries and aggregate compensation costs. Participating in the SOII would provide the necessary state-level information to comprehensively evaluate MSD injuries by industry, occupation and worker characteristics, thus facilitating targeted prevention strategies.
- Because state WC data are collected by the First Report of Injury (FRI) completed by employers or workers (not physicians) and injuries are only identified by body part or nature of injury (not diagnosis), these data cannot be used to comprehensively evaluate MSD injuries. The CDPHE

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<sup>i</sup> Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists. *Occupational Health Indicators: A Guide for Tracking Occupational Health Conditions and Their Determinants*. Last updated March 2014.

<sup>ii</sup> DOLE reports are available online: [www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/CDLE-WorkComp/CDLE/1248095316069](http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/CDLE-WorkComp/CDLE/1248095316069)

should continue seeking alternate methods to evaluate this measure. A first step might be to evaluate work-related hospitalizations, in which diagnosed MSDs can be classified using ICD-9-CM coding. However, these data would be limited since outpatient treatment and care are not captured in hospitalization admission data.