

1999-2000

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

WORKERS' COMPENSATION COMMISSION

AUGUST 1, 2000

HISTORICAL AND STATISTICAL DATA FOR THE ANNUAL REPORT

DATA AS OF JUNE 30, 2000

Workers' Compensation Commission
(Title of Agency)

Administrative Head ---- John A. Mastropietro, Chairman
(Name and Title)

Established -- 1913

Statutory Authority -- Chapter 568, General Statutes

Central Office -- 21 Oak St., Hartford, CT 06106 (Zip Code)
(Address)

Telephone No. -- 860-493-1500

Average number of full-time employees 150.

Recurring operating expenditures, 1999-2000 - \$14,512,040.17.

Capital outlay - \$152,439.00.

Organization Structure -- (attached)

Agency Mission

The Workers' Compensation Commission administers the workers' compensation laws of the State of Connecticut with the ultimate goal of ensuring that workers injured on the job receive prompt payment of lost work time benefits and attendant medical expenses. To this end, the Commission facilitates voluntary agreements, adjudicates disputes, makes findings and awards, hears and rules on appeals, and closes out cases through full and final stipulated settlements.

Statutory Responsibility

Since the Workers' Compensation Act (Chapter 568, C.G.S.) was adopted in 1913, numerous enhancements and modifications in coverage and benefits have been made by the Legislature. With few exceptions, all workers and employers are now covered by the workers' compensation laws. When a worker has suffered a job-related injury or illness, he or she is entitled to certain well-defined wage replacement and medical benefits. The mission of the Workers' Compensation Commission is to ensure injured employees' rights are fully protected, and that workers and employers fully carry out their legal responsibilities. There are fifteen At-Large Commissioners who serve in eight district offices throughout the state. They are appointed by the Governor with legislative approval. A sixteenth Commissioner serves as Chairman of the Commission. The Chairman is responsible for administration of the entire Commission. The Chairman also serves as Chief of the Compensation Review Board (CRB) along with two other Commissioners appointed by him for one-year terms to

hear appeals of cases decided by the Commissioners. The Commission also educates employees about their legal rights and helps rehabilitate and return injured workers to gainful employment. During FY 2000, the Commission's Safety Program Officers worked hard and effectively to monitor worker safety committees throughout the state. Prevention, education and rehabilitation are integral to the Commission's statutory responsibilities. A Statistical Division measures and monitors the caseload and performance of the Commission. In recent years, two landmark reform bills have become law.

The first, (Public Act 91-339) centralized administrative duties and powers in the person and Office of the Chairman to more effectively implement enforcement of the law. Twenty-three specific duties were assigned to the Chairman, including budgetary and personnel matters, assignment of Commissioners, and regulation of attorneys, physicians, and preferred provider organizations. The Chairman and his staff implement these responsibilities, guided by an Advisory Board composed of business and labor representatives, including an injured worker.

The second, (Public Act 93-228) effected historic reforms of the Connecticut workers' compensation laws effective July 1, 1993. The benefit modifications and related reforms contained in this Act, combined with the efficiencies engendered by Public Act 91-339, have resulted in payouts having decreased. Cumulative savings over the past five years are \$395 million compared to what costs would have been without the 1993 reforms.

Public Service

The Commission continually strives to upgrade service to its clientele. Two key goals are: expediting disputed claims settlement, and returning injured workers to productive jobs. These goals are closely monitored by the Commission through manual and automated reporting systems.

The Safety Program Officers work cooperatively and confidentially with employers to devise and implement safety programs resulting in reduced accidents, injuries, medical costs and lost workdays. 8,168 employer sites have been visited, and 4,006 safety and health committees, covering 784,822 employees, have been approved. Medical care plans, including preferred provider organizations, are also reviewed for compliance with workplace safety and health laws.

The Commission participates in the Connecticut Licensing Information Center, providing one-stop licensing information to state businesses and entrepreneurs via the Internet.

Improvements/Achievements 1999-2000

During the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2000, the Commission moved aggressively to provide more effective and efficient service delivery.

All duties and responsibilities continue to be executed effectively and punctually with one fewer full-time employees than last year.

Continual monitoring of hearing backlogs at the eight district offices, and reassignment of resources to meet heavy workloads, have resulted in a major decrease in time between initial hearing request and the date the hearing is actually

held. Hearing backlog is down dramatically for both informal and formal hearings. The Chairman actively monitors cases ensuring that no cases are unnecessarily delayed.

The Compensation Review Board continues to process cases expeditiously. This year, new appeals numbered 188. Meanwhile, there were 222 dispositions, including 125 written opinions.

During FY 2000, the number of workers successfully re-entering the workforce through workers' rehabilitation programs (chiefly on-the-job training) was 619 out of 1,060 total in re-training programs. This high success rate was achieved despite an annual budget \$7.4 million lower than the 1994 budget, a cut of 65 percent. These individuals are now supporting themselves and their families and paying taxes as a direct result of workers' rehabilitation programs.

To help monitor medical costs, (comprising more than 40 percent of total workers' compensation payments), the Commission staff reviews and approves applications for managed care plans. To date 3,957 employers with 424,817 employees have approved plans.

A steadily increasing percentage of on-line reporting of workplace injuries has resulted in more accurate data at lower cost.

The Commission's web site has expanded vastly, providing vital, up-to-date information on all aspects of the Commission's resources and services including the law, CRB decisions and late-breaking news. Users can download any or all of eleven web site channels without remaining on the Internet.

Reducing Waste

Worker Rehabilitation vocational education coordinators are assigned to specific district offices, allowing greater familiarity with client needs and resources available in various geographic areas of the state. Highly cost effective on-the-job training programs have replaced an earlier emphasis on formal education programs.

Strategic Planning/Business Planning

During FY 2000 the Commission implemented major hardware and software upgrades, resulting in greatly improved response time. Powerful new reporting software is enhancing the Commission's ability to address problems before they become costly, saving businesses and taxpayers many times the cost of the system. The Commission's data processing system anticipated the ''Y2K'' situation with no associated costs or problems. The strategic planning of the Commission has among its goals:

- elimination of duplicate claims;
- identification of non-insured employers;
- quick retrieval of records, saving personnel costs;
- sophisticated data analysis to identify trouble spots before they become serious, thus affording greatly enhanced service to Connecticut workers; and,
- worker rehabilitation case tracking.

Information Reported As Required by State Statute

The Commission's Affirmative Action Plan is currently in compliance. While the commission has no full time Affirmative

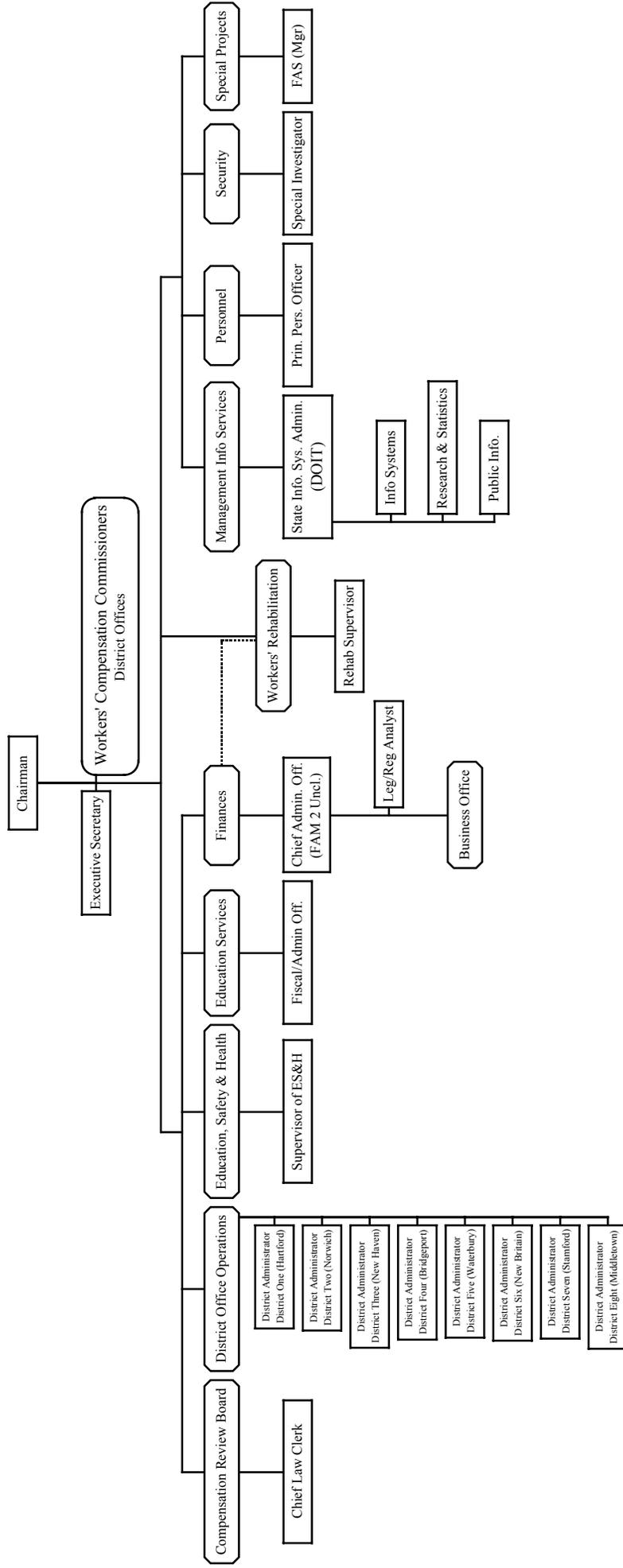
Action Officer, its Affirmative Action Plan and Program are prepared by its personnel officer. The commission will continue its commitment to the state Affirmative Action Program.

Key Performance Measures

FY 2000

Injuries/Illnesses -	82,473
Fatalities -	41
Informal Hearings -	37,162
Formal & Preformal Hearings -	6,841
Stipulations -	6,712
Voluntary Agreements	24,375
Awards -	1,950
Dismissals -	162
Education Services Information Responses -	191,686

WORKERS' COMPENSATION COMMISSION



Workers' Rehabilitation reports to the Chairman for policy issues and supervision, and to the Chief Administrative Officer for financial oversight.