

Industry Leader Award

Abigail Hudgens

Abigail Hudgens is the Administrator of the State of Tennessee's Bureau of Workers' Compensation. Prior to leading the Bureau, Abbie was a consultant in the private sector, a risk manager for Nashville and Davidson County Metropolitan Government, and a risk and benefits manager for the city of Knoxville. She earned a B.A. from the University of Memphis and a M.P.A. from the University of Tennessee. She has also earned an Associate in Claims and Associate in Risk Management from the Insurance Institute of America. She currently serves as the president of the Southern Association of Workers' Compensation Administrators (SAWCA) and is the Vice President of the International Association of Industrial Accident Boards and Commissions (IAIABC).

Abbie brings innovative ideas to the table and always seeks input from interested parties, as she exhibited during the debate and subsequent implementation of the Workers' Compensation Reform Act of 2013. She was primarily responsible for drafting legislation to reform the workers' compensation system in Tennessee to make the system fair for employers and employees, without favoring either side. She met business representatives, insurance representatives, health care providers, attorneys, and legislators in the drafting of the legislation. In selecting the workers' compensation judges to serve in this new administrative law system, she put together a committee of stakeholders to interview and to select judges from the candidates. The end result has been very positive. These select judges hear only workers' compensation cases and have an expertise in workers' compensation law. Under the new reforms, medical treatment has been provided more timely, awards of benefits are more predictable, and insurance premiums were lowered.

"Experience made me hungry for improvement. There's not enough emphasis on the long term. I see employers and insurance companies and adjustors go for short term cost savings. I see it happen more than it should, rather than the long term. If you treat the employee correctly, if you provide them good medical care on the front end, if you let them know that they're not going to lose their job, you will actually save money in the long run."

