



# The IAIABC 109<sup>th</sup> Convention Digest

September 11-14, 2023

Denver, Colorado



# The IAIABC 109th Convention

The 109th Convention attendees enjoyed three and a half days of discussion, learning, and connecting. This Convention Digest shares some of the most important takeaways from the conference. If you attended the Convention, you can access certain session recordings on [educate@iaiacb](mailto:educate@iaiacb) in the [IAIABC 109th Convention library](#).

Thank you to Paul Tauriello and the Colorado Division of Workers' Compensation for helping host the IAIABC 109th Convention. With over 30 registered attendees, Colorado DWC definitely made their presence known, and the IAIABC 109th Convention was all the better for it. Many thanks to the Colorado DWC!



## The Convention at a Glance

Metrics on the Convention show another successful event. With diverse attendance, the sharing of information was impactful for workers' compensation systems and organizations around the world.

**281** Attendees

**33** U.S. States Represented

**8** Non-U.S. Jurisdictions Represented

**59** Private Sector Organizations Represented

**41** Total Hours of Programming

Here's what attendees said about the IAIABC 109th Convention.

"I always love the tie into the city, the fresh speakers and content, and the thoughtful networking opportunities!"

"The program was well balanced with subject matter that is of interest and useful to wide variety of audiences."

"I am really excited about the connections/relationships I've developed with peer jurisdictions and service providers through IAIABC."

"[The Convention] provides me with insight to change how we do business and the drive to make it better. I love attending these meetings as it reinvigorates me to do better every day."

# President's Address

On the second day of the IAIABC Convention, Mark Long gave his President's Address. The following is an excerpt from his address:

“ The interchange of ideas and the interchange of experiences is really the foundation of what the IAIABC is. We bring our varied perspectives to the room and to our different groups. [We] talk about how we approach the industry and continue to try to improve on how we impact the day-to-day lives of injured workers, employers, and everybody that [the industry] touches.



The IAIABC exemplifies the unique balance of our varied membership, right? Each of us come to the table with a specific role in the industry, whether it be regulatory, EDI, medical providers, attorneys, Medicare experts, vocational rehabilitation consultants, and many more that I just can't list here today. The IAIABC provides the opportunity to explore each other's worlds to ensure that collectively we become the best caretakers of our industry. That's truly what we become, right? That's what we are as we approach these jobs. We all fall into this world of workers' comp or social security administration. We become caretakers of our industry and the IAIABC provides a spot for us to come together and become the best that we can be in that.

[...]Whether we're an expert on a topic or a novice, you know, as we enter a room, we go to a committee meeting, we're at a networking event, we're listening to a fantastic speaker, whatever that is, you know, maybe we take that opportunity to explore each other's worlds, listen intently and ask some questions because [...] we might just learn something. ”

## Mark Long

Michigan Workers' Disability Compensation Agency,  
IAIABC President, 2023.



# Program Highlights

The gathering of the IAIABC community during the annual Convention is not just an important tradition, but also a snapshot in time – speakers, topics, and programs developed to address the key issues and challenges of the day.

The IAIABC 109th Convention focused on “exploring” solutions to issues that span across the greater workers’ compensation community. With sessions focused on new technologies, breaking down complicated issues, implementing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts, and more, addressing the needs of the injured worker by advancing our systems was a key theme of the Convention.



## Keynote: Rowboat in a Hurricane: Dealing with Change and Unexpected Setbacks

Conference keynote presenter, Julie Angus, the first woman to row across the Atlantic Ocean from mainland to mainland, shared the impactful story of her journey. An explorer, scientist, and best-selling author, Angus gave a riveting account of her adventures rowing across the Atlantic, while sharing techniques on how to deal with constantly changing environments.

## Explore, Connect, & Expand Your Network

This session created an opportunity for attendees to build new connections by rotating tables to get to know a variety of attendees “speed networking” style. This addition to the program has become a new favorite for IAIABC attendees.



## International Panel: The Future of Work

Representatives from Finland, Malaysia, Manitoba, and Massachusetts discussed their experiences, challenges, and successes as it relates to their own workforces. Panelists discussed how changes in the physical workplace and the expanded use of technology has affected employee expectations. This international panel shined a light on how much we have in common across borders.

## EDI Claims Modernization Workshops

Dane Curtis discussed the current state and future directions of the claims modernization project. Following Dane’s presentation, EDI leaders Monica Blackwell, Tracey Palmioli, David Sprick, and Jeff Willard discussed model ideas to make financials less complex.

## Running Dreams – An Immigrant’s Hurdles and Triumphs after Blindness and Amputation

Carlos Serván, Executive Director of the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, shared his inspiring story. After suffering a workplace injury that took his sight and his right hand, Serván immigrated to the US for accident-related medical care, overcoming unexpected and difficult obstacles on his way to earning his undergraduate and master’s degrees, as well as a Juris Doctor. Serván shared strategies he has learned to assist those facing challenges in returning to work and how we can all adjust to remove obstacles for differently-abled individuals.



“ What made a real difference in my case was the support. ”



### Unveiling the Importance of AI and Data in Workers' Compensation

Hector Upegui presented with the goal to help the audience understand artificial intelligence (AI) better by: gaining more confidence in AI, feeling the importance of digital literacy needed in all organizations and in daily life, and understanding the importance of data and how "data is the new oil"

Hector outlined how AI uses statistics, probability, mathematics, and sentiment analysis to predict outcomes of specific text scenarios. He also iterated that AI is not science fiction, it is a computer resource available to all. Attendees also helped Hector celebrate his birthday!

### Severe Injuries Unraveled

Raji Chaderavian and Susan Schulte of NCCI provided a conceptual framework for identifying and categorizing severe injuries including TBIs, burns, and more. The differences between fast emerging claims and slow emerging claims were highlighted and some of the various treatment efforts required to treat these types of conditions were shared.

### Breaking the Chain that's Breaking the Bank

In this session, Robert Aurbach discussed mental health comorbidities including how they are currently viewed and the effects they can have on recovery, return to work, and the cost of a claim. Robert then shared recommendations on how workers' compensation professionals can change the system to treat mental health issues more effectively. These recommendations included setting standards for diagnoses, providing training for claims handlers on mental health, normalizing treatment, and working towards prevention of mental health issues in the workplace.

### A Look at Modernization Across Workers' Compensation Systems

Attendees heard presentations from two speakers on modernization in the workers' compensation space. Matt Bryant of Work Comp Strategies shared success factors and challenges that come with modernization efforts. Some key takeaways included the importance of planning and project governance, simplicity should be a priority for the ease of the user, and to anticipate problems and resistance from stakeholders.

Additionally, Donna Miller Wallace of WorkSafeNB shared details of how they reached their modernization goals. Critical success factors included stakeholder assessment, mapping the journey, partnering with experts, assigning accountability, and measuring the journey.

### Injured to Enlightened - Inside a Work Comp Pro's Personal Journey

Michelle Despres, a workers' compensation industry professional, shared the story of her work injury and insights she gained while navigating the system. She described the psychosocial challenges she overcame, Michelle's advice to workers' compensation professionals was to engage with the injured worker early and with compassion, collaborate with other stakeholders in the process to make the process smooth for the worker, be proactive and advocate for the injured worker, and share realistic expectations. Her biggest takeaway from her injury was that injured workers are not aware of the intricacies of the system, be the best you can be at what you do to help them be the best at what they do.





### NextGen Ignite

Fun, insightful, and informative, the NextGen "Ignite" session has become a conference favorite, with IAIABC NextGen Award recipients giving TED-Talk style presentations. Seven of the nine 2023 IAIABC NextGen recipients, Harsh Bhasin, Claudia Byers, Joel Cummings, Jessica Jones, Katie Leveen, Ann-Kathrin Schaefer, and Amanda Waltemath gave insightful and entertaining presentations, with Erin Bishop (NextGen Class of 2020) moderating. Attendees laughed and learned more about these exceptional workers' compensation leaders who are guiding the industry into the future. The future of workers' compensation is in good hands with individuals like the NextGen recipients leading the way.

### mCOT: Working Together to Reverse the Opioid Epidemic

Attendees learned about Washington State's recently launched pilot: modified Chronic Opioid Therapy (mCOT). Jason Fodeman and Jaymie Mai discussed how the pilot will reduce injured workers' dependency on opioids. Attendees gained insights on cutting edge ways to address chronic pain and improve the quality of life of injured workers.

“ [The Pilot] has given us the opportunity to look at really complicated claims and address them in a holistic, work-centered way. ”

### Savoring Success: A Breakfast Session on Creating a Highly Connected & Engaged Workplace

During this session, The Colorado Division of Workers' Compensation shared their how their program introduction and education (PIE) onboarding and buddy programs connect and engage their employees. Their PIE program has created cohorts of new hires that through games, virtual meetings with supervisors, and in-person meetings, foster connections and relationships with employees. Colorado's buddy program has provided new hires with two buddies typically from a different unit than they work in to get a holistic look at the organization. Once a month, new hires meet with their volunteer buddies. The buddy program has provided support, gave new hires someone to ask their questions to, and makes them competent, comfortable, and connected to the workplace.

### Advancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in Workers' Compensation Systems

The United States Department of Labor, Office of Workers' Compensation, presented an overview of their diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) efforts including a barrier analysis, advancing racial equity and support for underserved communities, and the development and implementation of plans to eliminate barriers found in the analysis. The presentation was followed by a panel discussion of jurisdictional representatives from New York, Ohio, Tennessee, and the U.S. Department of Labor on their diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility initiatives. Troy Haley discussed Tennessee's DEIA initiative includes a diversity council, which helps coordinate lunch and learns and videos internally, 60+ forms in Korean and Spanish and interpreter training. Clarissa Rodriguez discussed the various tools available in New York including: ASL for board meetings, forms that are translated into 12 different languages, staff and ombuds that are bilingual in Spanish, a language access plan, a chief diversity officer, lunch and learns, and diversity section in their staff newsletter.

### Trends Impacting Medical Care in Workers' Compensation

The Convention ended with an insightful panel made up of industry experts who discussed current trends in the workers' compensation ecosystem. Trends discussed included network adequacy, provider directories, prior authorization, mental health access, topicals, and fee schedules. The session ended with a lively question and answer period. Attendees left with takeaways that will allow them to stay ahead of the game in a rapidly evolving industry.

# Jurisdictional Forums

Highlights of the Convention program, three jurisdictional forums allow regulatory representatives to share updates and discuss challenges. These sessions also help build the community of the IAABC as members learn from one another and see the similarities in issues impacting systems.

## Heads of Delegation and Associate Members' Forum

Associate Member Council leaders Sandy Shtab and Jill Dulich led jurisdictional representatives in discussion about current and coming policy issues. Information shared was insightful and valuable to both the regulatory and private sector communities.

Jurisdictional leaders shared insights into issues like how to get heard by their legislature when lawmakers have other priorities with broad appeal to constituents. Jurisdictions shared about the various commissions and councils that make recommendations to legislators, finding new legislators to reach out to about workers' compensation, and more.

Another discussion topic were technology and automation considerations to supplement scarce personnel resources and if they are facing financial, legislative, regulatory, or other hurdles to implement in their agency. Jurisdictions discussed chatbots, artificial intelligence, apps for remote filing, issues with funding for modernization, single sign on options, and OCR to reduce paper.

The final discussion topic focused on what impacts have been seen with high adjuster turnover due to more remote work and competition for claims talent. Jurisdictions discussed issues pain points of continuing education for adjusters lacking, government agencies can't pay what private companies can, staff turnover and retirements are hard to replace, employees want workplace flexibility, burnout a big issue, and timeliness of compensability of claims delayed.

## EDI Jurisdictional Forum

EDI Committee leaders shared reports on recent changes that will impact the standards. Then, representatives from 21 jurisdictions shared updates on the IAABC EDI Standards they use including changes in their systems, implementations, and modernization plans.

## Heads of Delegation Forum

During this session reserved for jurisdictional representatives only, regulators shared insights and asked questions about regulatory and administrative issues. This was an opportunity for regulators to discuss challenges of mutual interest, while connecting with their peers.





# President's Awards

The President's Awards are conferred every year at the IAIABC Convention. This year, seven individuals were recognized. Congratulations to these exceptional workers' compensation leaders.



## President's Award

### **Jennifer Wolf**

President and CEO, Minnesota Workers' Compensation Insurers Association



## Frances Perkins Award

### **Matt Carey**

Chief Administrator, Rhode Island Division of Workers' Compensation



## International Collaboration Award

### **Evelyn McGill**

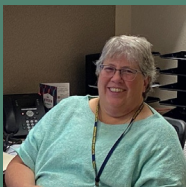
Executive Director, Virginia Workers' Compensation Commission



## Samuel Gompers Award

### **Sean Egan**

Deputy Director, Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Opportunity



## Award of Merit

### **Theresa McGowan-Sroczyk**

Dispute Resolution Section Manager, Montana Employment Standards Division



## Outstanding Achievement in EDI

### **Myra Chang**

Managing Director, Travelers



## Associate Member Award of Merit

### **Kathy Bray**

SVP and Chief Legal Officer, SFM Mutual Insurance Company



## Past President's Award

### **Gregor Kemper**

Director of International Relations, German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV)





# Committee Meeting Summaries

Each committee of the IAIABC met during the IAIABC 109th Convention. Many committees hosted presentations on topics related to committee work. Thank you to the committee leaders and members for their hard work in developing valuable presentations and hosting meaningful discussions.

## Associate Member Council: ChatAMC

By introducing the speakers with fun and unique facts about them, moderator Stephen Peacock (Safety National) set the tone for a productive and informative discussion amongst six jurisdictional leaders. Jeff Nelson (Texas), Brittany O'Neil, (Florida), Brenda Heilman (Washington), Jackie Schauer (California), Aubrey Chigwada (Virginia), and Amy Kingston (Colorado) divulged their paths into the industry, biggest accomplishments, and jurisdictional insights on current issues. The audience then heard information on the Telemedicine Paper that is being updated. The Associate Member Council and volunteers will continue updating the paper until it is ready to be republished on the IAIABC website.

## Dispute Resolution Committee

Three representatives from Colorado provided an overview of Colorado's workers' compensation history and current processes of their dispute resolution system. They also shared plans and ideas for the future. Following the presentation, the audience heard updates on topics previously discussed at virtual Committee meetings including PTSD and presumptions, recently passed and pending bills, and navigating hybrid hearings.

## EDI Claims Committee

The Claims Committee Meeting centered on discussions about recently approved and pending Implementation Requirement Requests (IRRs) with an emphasis on language clarity and effective denial dates to enhance standards and research in workers' compensation claims. Discussion addressed impairment ratings for multiple teeth and the need for clarification in the language, a new date for California's decision to deny a claim, clerical updates, and reporting a spouse when gender is "U" or "X," was withdrawn.

## EDI Proof of Coverage Committee

In the Proof of Coverage Committee Meeting, updates on the digital POC credential, online training courses, and the availability of a new POC webinar for credential renewal updates were provided. The successful transition of Oklahoma to the IAIABC POC XML format was announced, concluding the transition by all jurisdictions. The WCIO shared significant developments, which included the integration of Data Collection Organization (DCO) applicability into WCPOLS specifications, extending the Email Address field capacity, and discussions regarding the future use of JSON for reporting, including the development of a translator. Notably, Utah's plan to mandate Claim Administrator FEIN and Email Address data elements in POC, effective April 1, 2024, was highlighted, with NCCI set to publish relevant circulars.



### EDI Systems Committee

The EDI Systems meeting provided insights into the Claims and POC XML project, discussing the latest developments in XML standards for claims and proof of coverage. An update to the Trading Partner Tables, focusing on claims enhancements, was also discussed. The meeting also included a presentation and update on the Glossary Work group's progress and the collaborative efforts. An IRR item was introduced for comments, addressing modifications to the IAIABC Release 3.1 XML schema for DN0104 Test/Production Code, emphasizing the value "D" for Development.

### EDI Medical / ProPay Committee

During the IAIABC EDI Medical and ProPay Committee Meeting, an X12 and NCVHS update was shared. The ICD-11 update highlighted the transition from ICD-10 to ICD-11, with potential phase-in in 2025-27, along with the challenges of vetting U.S. clinical modification (CM) changes. The committee will focus on a companion guide cleanup, seeking volunteers to enhance content and formatting. State representatives shared updates and future plans for the adoption of national standards, updates to companion guides, and challenges related to virtual credit cards. The meeting concluded with a focus on challenges and consistency in medical state reporting, highlighting the importance of accurate data gathering and the need for clerical IRRs to address specific issues.



### EDI Council

The EDI Council Meeting featured updates and discussions on each of the IAIABC EDI Standards with a focus on claims IRRs, proof of coverage webinars, and WCIO updates. The Systems Committee shared changes to trading partner tables and the implementation of terms from the glossary. In the Medical segment, discussions centered around HIPPA regulations, X12 format recommendations, and the decision to postpone ICD-11 updates. The meeting addressed old and new business, including a POC pilot transition and upcoming elections, with considerations for meeting frequency, policy deviations, and jurisdictional compliance. Claims modernization was emphasized, and the meeting concluded with discussion of controlling the timing of state implementations to avoid coinciding with IAIABC events.

### International Committee

Attendees at the International Committee meeting were able to hear a jurisdictional spotlight from Janne Reini of the Finnish Workers' Compensation Center (TVK). Reini discussed how workers' compensation is executed in Finland and what role TVK plays in coordinating the decentralized system. Reini also shared details of the most recent workers' compensation legislation passed in Finland. Additionally, IAIABC Executive Director Heather Lore shared details on international conferences the IAIABC has participated in recently and shared details of upcoming opportunities for further international collaboration.



### Medical Issues Committee

The Medical Issues Committee opened the floor to attendees for a roundtable discussion on issues that "keep Committee members up at night." Topics included in this discussion included the growing number of people injured workers have to coordinate with throughout their injury, provider shortage specializing in occupational injuries, health equity including timely access to care and services for a variety of populations, medical approval delays, effective treatment approaches for PTSD, compounded meds, physician dispensing, and cost of surgeries in usual and customary states. Many jurisdictional and industry representatives engaged in the lively discussion.

### Regulation Committee

The Regulation Committee discussed the Safety First program from US Federal OSHA, that allows businesses to have a consultation with experts in the field who will guide them in the way they should operate in order to protect workers from injuries in the first place. The Committee then heard a presentation from Greg Gress, Manager of the Colorado State University Health and Safety Consultation Program about Colorado's consultation program. Their program provides free-of-charge voluntary safety inspections and recommendations for small to medium sized businesses.

### Research and Standards Committee

The Research and Standards Committee began with an update on the recently launched subcommittee that will address the Claims Measures Survey. The subcommittee's scope was discussed and the audience was asked to give feedback on the survey as it currently exists. The committee also heard a presentation from Richard Adu-Asamoah, the Economic Research & Policy Bureau Chief for the New Mexico Workers' Compensation Administration. Adu-Asamoah presented on New Mexico's methodology for pricing cannabis, including both the initial methodology and their revised approach to pricing in a more competitive market.

### Work Disability Prevention and Return to Work Committee

After an update on the recent educational modules that have been released to educate@iaaiabc, the Committee welcomed Nathan Chobo from Linea Solutions for a presentation on change management. With the concept that "A typical transition is not one directional, linear, or a smooth process," Nathan and the audience explored various stakeholders, their motivations, and their potential barriers to change as well as how to potentially address those barriers. Nathan's presentation emphasized the importance of change management and why it is critical in cultural modernizations for individuals as well as organizations.





## Thank You Sponsors

Thank you, sponsors, for your generosity in supporting the IAIABC 109th Convention. Your contributions are appreciated!





## Upcoming IAIABC Events

### **The IAIABC Forum 2024**

April 8-10, 2024

Cincinnati, Ohio

Hyatt Regency Cincinnati

### **IAIABC 110<sup>th</sup> Convention**

September 23-26, 2024

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Hilton Toronto

## Contact the IAIABC

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