AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY JUNE 23, 2016

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY JUNE 15, 2016

AMENDED IN SENATE JANUARY 4, 2016

AMENDED IN SENATE APRIL 30, 2015

AMENDED IN SENATE APRIL 13, 2015

SENATE BILL No. 563

Introduced by Senator Pan

February 26, 2015

An act to amend Section 4610 of the Labor Code, relating to workers' compensation.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 563, as amended, Pan. Workers' compensation: utilization review.

Existing law requires every employer, for purposes of workers' compensation, to establish a utilization review process to prospectively, retrospectively, or concurrently review requests by physicians for authorization to provide recommended medical treatment to injured employees. Existing law establishes timeframes for an employer to make a determination regarding a physician's request. Existing law requires the utilization review process to be governed by written policies and procedures, and requires that these policies and procedures be filed with the Administrative Director of the Division of Workers' Compensation and disclosed by the employer to employees, physicians, and the public upon request.

This bill would prohibit the employer, or any entity conducting utilization review on behalf of the employer, from offering or providing any financial incentive or consideration to a physician based on the

number of modifications, delays, or denials made by the physician. The bill would authorize the administrative director to review any compensation agreement, payment schedule, or contract between the employer, or any entity conducting utilization review on behalf of the employer, and the utilization review physician. The bill would make any information disclosed to the administrative director confidential and not subject to public disclosure, except as specified.

Existing constitutional provisions require that a statute that limits the right of access to the meetings of public bodies or the writings of public officials and agencies be adopted with findings demonstrating the interest protected by the limitation and the need for protecting that interest.

This bill would make legislative findings to that effect.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes. State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 4610 of the Labor Code is amended to read:

4610. (a) For purposes of this section, "utilization review" means utilization review or utilization management functions that prospectively, retrospectively, or concurrently review and approve, modify, delay, or deny, based in whole or in part on medical necessity to cure and relieve, treatment recommendations by physicians, as defined in Section 3209.3, prior to, retrospectively, or concurrent with the provision of medical treatment services pursuant to Section 4600.

(b) Every employer shall establish a utilization review process in compliance with this section, either directly or through its insurer or an entity with which an employer or insurer contracts for these services.

(c) Each utilization review process shall be governed by written policies and procedures. These policies and procedures shall ensure that decisions based on the medical necessity to cure and relieve of proposed medical treatment services are consistent with the schedule for medical treatment utilization adopted pursuant to Section 5307.27. These policies and procedures, and a description of the utilization process, shall be filed with the administrative

director and shall be disclosed by the employer to employees, physicians, and the public upon request.

(d) If an employer, insurer, or other entity subject to this section requests medical information from a physician in order to determine whether to approve, modify, delay, or deny requests for authorization, the employer shall request only the information reasonably necessary to make the determination. The employer, insurer, or other entity shall employ or designate a medical director who holds an unrestricted license to practice medicine in this state issued pursuant to Section 2050 or 2450 of the Business and Professions Code. The medical director shall ensure that the process by which the employer or other entity reviews and approves, modifies, delays, or denies requests by physicians prior to, retrospectively, or concurrent with the provision of medical treatment services, complies with the requirements of this section. Nothing in this section shall be construed as restricting the existing authority of the Medical Board of California.

(e) (1) No person other than a licensed physician who is competent to evaluate the specific clinical issues involved in the medical treatment services, and where these services are within the scope of the physician's practice, requested by the physician may modify, delay, or deny requests for authorization of medical treatment for reasons of medical necessity to cure and relieve.

(2) (A) The employer, or any entity conducting utilization review on behalf of the employer, shall neither offer nor provide any financial incentive or consideration to a physician based on the number of modifications, delays, or denials made by the physician under this section.

(B) An insurer or third-party administrator shall not refer utilization review services conducted on behalf of an employer under this section to an entity in which the insurer or third-party administrator has a financial interest as defined under Section 139.32. This prohibition does not apply if the insurer or third-party administrator provides the employer with prior written disclosure of both of the following:

(i) The entity conducting the utilization review services.

(ii) The insurer or third-party administrator's financial interest in the entity.

(3) The administrative director has authority pursuant to this section to review any compensation agreement, payment schedule,

or contract between the employer, or any entity conducting utilization review on behalf of the employer, and the utilization review physician. Any information disclosed to the administrative director pursuant to this paragraph shall be considered confidential information and not subject to disclosure pursuant to the California Public Records Act (Chapter 3.5 (commencing with Section 6250) of Division 7 of Title 1 of the Government ~~Code) unless the division can demonstrate that the information was in the public domain at the time it was disclosed or has entered the public domain through no fault of the division.~~ *Code)*. Disclosure of the information to the administrative director pursuant to this subdivision shall not waive the provisions of the Evidence Code relating to privilege.

(f) The criteria or guidelines used in the utilization review process to determine whether to approve, modify, delay, or deny medical treatment services shall be all of the following:

(1) Developed with involvement from actively practicing physicians.

(2) Consistent with the schedule for medical treatment utilization adopted pursuant to Section 5307.27.

(3) Evaluated at least annually, and updated if necessary.

(4) Disclosed to the physician and the employee, if used as the basis of a decision to modify, delay, or deny services in a specified case under review.

(5) Available to the public upon request. An employer shall only be required to disclose the criteria or guidelines for the specific procedures or conditions requested. An employer may charge members of the public reasonable copying and postage expenses related to disclosing criteria or guidelines pursuant to this paragraph. Criteria or guidelines may also be made available through electronic means. No charge shall be required for an employee whose physician's request for medical treatment services is under review.

(g) In determining whether to approve, modify, delay, or deny requests by physicians prior to, retrospectively, or concurrent with the provisions of medical treatment services to employees all of the following requirements shall be met:

(1) Prospective or concurrent decisions shall be made in a timely fashion that is appropriate for the nature of the employee's condition, not to exceed five working days from the receipt of the

information reasonably necessary to make the determination, but in no event more than 14 days from the date of the medical treatment recommendation by the physician. In cases where the review is retrospective, a decision resulting in denial of all or part of the medical treatment service shall be communicated to the individual who received services, or to the individual's designee, within 30 days of receipt of information that is reasonably necessary to make this determination. If payment for a medical treatment service is made within the time prescribed by Section 4603.2, a retrospective decision to approve the service need not otherwise be communicated.

(2) When the employee's condition is such that the employee faces an imminent and serious threat to his or her health, including, but not limited to, the potential loss of life, limb, or other major bodily function, or the normal timeframe for the decisionmaking process, as described in paragraph (1), would be detrimental to the employee's life or health or could jeopardize the employee's ability to regain maximum function, decisions to approve, modify, delay, or deny requests by physicians prior to, or concurrent with, the provision of medical treatment services to employees shall be made in a timely fashion that is appropriate for the nature of the employee's condition, but not to exceed 72 hours after the receipt of the information reasonably necessary to make the determination.

(3) (A) Decisions to approve, modify, delay, or deny requests by physicians for authorization prior to, or concurrent with, the provision of medical treatment services to employees shall be communicated to the requesting physician within 24 hours of the decision. Decisions resulting in modification, delay, or denial of all or part of the requested health care service shall be communicated to physicians initially by telephone or facsimile, and to the physician and employee in writing within 24 hours for concurrent review, or within two business days of the decision for prospective review, as prescribed by the administrative director. If the request is not approved in full, disputes shall be resolved in accordance with Section 4610.5, if applicable, or otherwise in accordance with Section 4062.

(B) In the case of concurrent review, medical care shall not be discontinued until the employee's physician has been notified of the decision and a care plan has been agreed upon by the physician that is appropriate for the medical needs of the employee. Medical

care provided during a concurrent review shall be care that is medically necessary to cure and relieve, and an insurer or self-insured employer shall only be liable for those services determined medically necessary to cure and relieve. If the insurer or self-insured employer disputes whether or not one or more services offered concurrently with a utilization review were medically necessary to cure and relieve, the dispute shall be resolved pursuant to Section 4610.5, if applicable, or otherwise pursuant to Section 4062. Any compromise between the parties that an insurer or self-insured employer believes may result in payment for services that were not medically necessary to cure and relieve shall be reported by the insurer or the self-insured employer to the licensing board of the provider or providers who received the payments, in a manner set forth by the respective board and in such a way as to minimize reporting costs both to the board and to the insurer or self-insured employer, for evaluation as to possible violations of the statutes governing appropriate professional practices. No fees shall be levied upon insurers or self-insured employers making reports required by this section.

(4) Communications regarding decisions to approve requests by physicians shall specify the specific medical treatment service approved. Responses regarding decisions to modify, delay, or deny medical treatment services requested by physicians shall include a clear and concise explanation of the reasons for the employer's decision, a description of the criteria or guidelines used, and the clinical reasons for the decisions regarding medical necessity. If a utilization review decision to deny or delay a medical service is due to incomplete or insufficient information, the decision shall specify the reason for the decision and specify the information that is needed.

(5) If the employer, insurer, or other entity cannot make a decision within the timeframes specified in paragraph (1) or (2) because the employer or other entity is not in receipt of all of the information reasonably necessary and requested, because the employer requires consultation by an expert reviewer, or because the employer has asked that an additional examination or test be performed upon the employee that is reasonable and consistent with good medical practice, the employer shall immediately notify the physician and the employee, in writing, that the employer cannot make a decision within the required timeframe, and specify

the information requested but not received, the expert reviewer to be consulted, or the additional examinations or tests required. The employer shall also notify the physician and employee of the anticipated date on which a decision may be rendered. Upon receipt of all information reasonably necessary and requested by the employer, the employer shall approve, modify, or deny the request for authorization within the timeframes specified in paragraph (1) or (2).

(6) A utilization review decision to modify, delay, or deny a treatment recommendation shall remain effective for 12 months from the date of the decision without further action by the employer with regard to any further recommendation by the same physician for the same treatment unless the further recommendation is supported by a documented change in the facts material to the basis of the utilization review decision.

(7) Utilization review of a treatment recommendation shall not be required while the employer is disputing liability for injury or treatment of the condition for which treatment is recommended pursuant to Section 4062.

(8) If utilization review is deferred pursuant to paragraph (7), and it is finally determined that the employer is liable for treatment of the condition for which treatment is recommended, the time for the employer to conduct retrospective utilization review in accordance with paragraph (1) shall begin on the date the determination of the employer's liability becomes final, and the time for the employer to conduct prospective utilization review shall commence from the date of the employer's receipt of a treatment recommendation after the determination of the employer's liability.

(h) Every employer, insurer, or other entity subject to this section shall maintain telephone access for physicians to request authorization for health care services.

(i) If the administrative director determines that the employer, insurer, or other entity subject to this section has failed to meet any of the timeframes in this section, or has failed to meet any other requirement of this section, the administrative director may assess, by order, administrative penalties for each failure. A proceeding for the issuance of an order assessing administrative penalties shall be subject to appropriate notice to, and an opportunity for a hearing with regard to, the person affected. The

administrative penalties shall not be deemed to be an exclusive remedy for the administrative director. These penalties shall be deposited in the Workers' Compensation Administration Revolving Fund.

SEC. 2. The Legislature finds and declares that Section 1 of this act, which amends Section 4610 of the Labor Code, imposes a limitation on the public's right of access to the meetings of public bodies or the writings of public officials and agencies within the meaning of Section 3 of Article I of the California Constitution. Pursuant to that constitutional provision, the Legislature makes the following findings to demonstrate the interest protected by this limitation and the need for protecting that interest:

The limitations on the people's rights of access set forth in this act are necessary to protect the privacy and integrity of information submitted to the Administrative Director of the Division of Workers' Compensation pursuant to paragraph (3) of subdivision (e) of Section 4610 of the Labor Code.

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