



Nurse Practitioners of Oregon Supports Senate Bill 533

SB 533: Nurse Practitioner treatment timelines in Workers' Compensation

Background

Oregon has a well-documented primary care provider shortage. In some areas of the state Nurse Practitioners are the only primary care providers. Oregon Nurse Practitioners have earned a broad scope of practice and practice independently—without the supervision of a physician. They provide comprehensive care to their patients, including diagnosing and treating illness, and prescribing and dispensing medication. Since gaining approval to treat workers' compensation patients, Oregon's Nurse Practitioners have shown they can provide high quality care to injured workers.

Workers' compensation laws dealing with the authority of different providers to treat injured workers have varied over time. Currently, Oregon Nurse Practitioners can treat workers' compensation patients for 90 days and authorize time loss for 60 days.

Problem

Whether choosing to see a Nurse Practitioner because a Nurse Practitioner is an injured worker's primary provider who the worker knows and trusts, or because an injured worker chooses a Nurse Practitioner as a new provider, the limits on Nurse Practitioner authority in the Workers' Compensation system don't serve patients well. The current restrictions on the authority of Nurse Practitioners to treat injured workers (90 days treatment, 60 days time loss) causes a disruption in continuity of care for claims that extend beyond 90 days. Once a patient being treated by a Nurse Practitioner reaches the 90 day mark, the Nurse Practitioner must refer the patient to a physician. This transfer can result in duplication of care, delays for patients, and can force patients to travel to find a physician to treat them. It can also increase costs to the system. Data from 2009 suggests that roughly 75 percent of claims treated by a Nurse Practitioner are closed within 90 days.

Senate Bill 533

SB 533 was developed by the Management Labor Advisory Committee with input from a number of stakeholders, including Nurse Practitioners of Oregon, who are concerned about access to care for injured workers. SB 533 would extend the time period Nurse Practitioners may treat injured workers and authorize time loss; improving access to care and continuity of care for injured workers.

SB 533 extends the treatment timeline and ability to authorize time loss to 180 days, thus reducing costs to insurers and improving continuity of care for patients. This legislation would save patients from having to go through the unnecessary step of finding a new provider to finish their treatment.

SB 533 also includes a come-along provision that will ensure patients who have an established relationship with a primary care provider who is not a member of the employers' Managed Care Organization can continue to be treated by their provider for a work related injury.

To reach ONA's Legislative team contact:

Sarah Baessler at baessler@oregonrn.org or call 503.351.5965
Jack Dempsey at jack@dempseypublicaffairs.com or call 503.358.2864
Jenn Baker at baker@oregonrn.org or call 503.621.8729
Kevin Mealy at mealy@oregonrn.org or call 503.293.0011