



MONTANA WORKERS' COMPENSATION UTILIZATION & TREATMENT GUIDELINES
Presented to the Economic Affairs Interim Committee
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The Montana Guidelines establish evidence-based utilization and treatment Guidelines for medical services for workers' compensation injuries and occupational diseases, as authorized by § 39-71-704, MCA. The Guidelines include General Guideline Principles at the beginning of each chapter, which are designed to adequately and consistently address the functional improvement goals of an injured worker.

The Guidelines are applicable to all medical services provided on or after July 1, 2011. The Guidelines establish a presumption of compensability for injuries and occupational diseases occurring on or after July 1, 2007. For those occurring on or before June 30, 2007, treatment in accordance with the Guidelines constitutes reasonable medical treatment.

Prior authorization is not required for treatment within the Guidelines. Prior authorization may be obtained in specific cases for treatments outside the Guidelines. Disputes regarding denied treatment and prior authorization may be brought to the Department under the Independent Medical Review (IMR) process.

The purpose of the Guidelines is to assist injured workers in receiving prompt and appropriate care, assist injured workers in stay-at-work/return-to-work options, assist clinicians in making decisions for specific conditions, and help insurers make reimbursement determinations.

Although the primary purpose of the Guidelines is advisory and educational, the Guidelines are enforceable for payment purposes. The department recognizes that acceptable medical practice may include deviations from these Guidelines, as individual cases dictate. Therefore, these Guidelines are not relevant as evidence of a provider's legal standard of professional care.

The MT U & T Guidelines were implemented by rule effective July 1, 2011. The Guidelines are available to the public at no charge and an online tool is available to search for specific treatments and services.
www.mtGuidelines.com

The Guidelines were developed with the assistance of a group of 13 Montana medical providers who treat injured workers. The group reviewed four different Guidelines already established as evidence-based Guidelines. The medical provider group recommended the Colorado Guidelines as the primary one, supplemented by the American College of Occupational Environmental Medicine (ACOEM) Guidelines.

The goals of the Department were to establish evidence-based Guidelines that result in timely, effective treatment for injured workers; acceptable to Montana's medical providers; elimination of the need for prior authorization; Guidelines already established and available due to limited Department resources; and readily accessible with minimal cost to the Department and public.

Cost savings through the use of Guidelines was never the goal. However, cost savings are expected because workers should receive timely, effective treatment that will aid in healing and return to work. Medical providers don't need prior authorization for recommended treatment so payment issues should be reduced. Disputes over reasonable medical treatment should be reduced and resolved through the Independent Medical Review process. The National Council of Compensation Insurers (NCCI) did not price the Guidelines.

The long term impact of Guidelines in meeting the goals outlined by the Department will be evaluated over time through trends in medical benefits paid, frequency of treatments, duration workers are off work, number of disputes over payments, number of disputes over denied treatment, and satisfaction surveys of workers, employers, and medical providers.

INDEPENDENT MEDICAL REVIEW

An injured worker, treating physician, or the insurer may request an IMR when medical services have been denied by the insurer. The Department's Medical Director, Dr. Carla Huitt, conducts the review.

Dr. Huitt will conduct a review of the medical records and request for services submitted by the parties. She will issue a non-binding recommendation to approve the treatment, offer other recommended treatments in the Guidelines, or advise the treatment is not recommended. Dr. Huitt considers the evidence-based information in the Guidelines in addition to the condition of the injured worker and the treatment history and recommendations of the physician requesting the treatment.

If either party disagrees with Dr. Huitt's recommendation, the next step is mandatory mediation prior to proceeding to the Workers' Compensation Court. The Department's website for independent medical reviews is <http://erd.dli.mt.gov/utilization-a-treatment-Guidelines-project/imrinfo.html>

Statistics through December 2013

R=Recommend, NR=Not Recommended, RO=Recommended other treatments, RC=Recommended w/conditions and other treatments, NIMR=Not qualified for IMR

