

ADVISORY NO. 298
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TOPIC: EMPLOYEE'S REQUEST TO CHANGE TREATING DOCTORS
TWCC-53

The TWCC has published Advisory 2001-01. This advisory controls the process by which an employee requests a change of treating doctors. Changes to the TWCC-53 form and the process by which an employee may change treating doctors come as the result of concerns that requests for a change in treating doctors may be originating inappropriately. Another concern is that the Commission staff may have not been consistent in its' handling of requests to change treating doctors. The Commission is seeking to improve the process for injured employees to request a change of treating doctor from the initial choice of a doctor.

To improve the process, the TWCC has modified the TWCC-53 form. **The newly edited form may be used immediately; however, it will become mandatory effective April 1, 2001.** The form now includes a section for contact information for the current treating doctor and a place to indicate current work status. In addition, the instructions for completing the form have been changed to clarify the process. The form has also been changed to remind system participants that only an injured employee may initiate the request to change doctors and others are not to initiate the process or solicit a request to change treating doctors.

The TWCC has provided additional training to TWCC staff to increase consistency throughout the state and to ensure that requests to change treating doctor are handled in accordance with the Act and the TWCC rules. The emphasis of the training has been to remind Commission staff that to be approved, requests for a change of treating doctor must demonstrate a legitimate reason for changing doctors. The criteria for approving a change of treating doctor may include the following:

1. Whether the treatment by the current doctor is medically inappropriate;
2. The professional reputation of the doctor;
3. Whether the employee is receiving appropriate medical care to reach maximum medical improvement;
4. Whether a conflict exists between the employee and the doctor to the extent that the doctor patient relationship is jeopardized or impaired; and
5. The selected doctor chooses not to be responsible for coordinating the injured employee's health care.

Generalized statements that do not give Commission staff sufficient information to determine whether or not the request should be approved may result in a telephone call to the injured

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employee to obtain clarification. Requests for change of treating doctor should include sufficient explanation and/or documentation to demonstrate why the treating doctor should be changed.

The Commission encourages immediate use of this revised form; however, **the new form will be mandatory for all requests filed on or after April 1, 2001.**

Please review the attached TWCC Advisory 2001-01 for further clarification on these changes. We welcome any questions you may have on this change to the process surrounding the new TWCC-53 form.