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Workers' Compensation Update: Medical Treatment Guidelines

by Juliann Sum

Since 2004, claims administrators have been required to pay for treatment that follows the *Occupational Medicine Practice Guidelines, Second Edition*, published by the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM). Under regulations adopted in 2009, claims administrators must also pay for treatment that follows additional guidelines covering acupuncture treatment, chronic pain treatment, and post-surgical treatment.

For workers injured in 2004 or later, the 2004 legislation also limits an injured worker to a total of 24 chiropractic visits, 24 physical therapy visits, and 24 occupational therapy visits, unless the claims administrator authorizes additional visits in writing. These limits do not apply when the visits are for post-surgical treatment under the new guidelines described above.

This information updates page 26 of *Workers' Compensation in California: A Guidebook for Injured Workers, 3rd Edition, November 2006*, available online at www.lohp.org.

The laws governing the limits on chiropractic, physical therapy, and occupational therapy visits are in section 4604.5 of the California Labor Code. To download section 4605.4, go to www.leginfo.ca.gov (link to: California Law).

Juliann Sum is an attorney with the Labor Occupational Health Program, University of California at Berkeley. For more information about injured workers' rights and how to prevent job-related injuries and illnesses, go to www.lohp.org.