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DWCNewsline

Division of Workers' Compensation
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Division of Workers' Compensation posts revised draft qualified medical evaluator regulations to online forum for public comment

The Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC) has revised selected qualified medical evaluator (QME) regulations and posted them to the online forum where members of the public may review and comment on the proposal.

The proposed changes would limit a physician to a maximum of five QME office locations and up to five additional office locations in zip codes in which fewer than five QME's are currently certified in the QME's medical specialty. This proposal addresses a concern raised in a recent presentation made by the California Commission on Health and Safety and Workers' Compensation (CHSWC) revealing that QME assignments have become increasingly concentrated among a small number of QME's (QME's who list more than 10 different locations at which they perform evaluations). Specifically, from 2005-2010 the number of QME's registered has ranged from 3,000 to 5,500, but only 31 QME's wrote 10 percent of all reports evaluated by the Disability Evaluation Unit (DEU). In 2010, 3.9 percent of QME's listed 11 or more office locations and those QME's received 39 percent of the panel assignments. The goal of the proposed revision is to keep providers interested in participating as QME's, rather than leaving the system due to few panel assignments. In addition to limiting the number of QME office locations per physician, the proposals would require the physicians to comply with the applicable disability accommodation laws.

In response to a regulation adopted by the Board of Chiropractic Examiners, the administrative director is clarifying sections 12 and 13 to state that the administrative director shall recognize only those specialty boards recognized by the California licensing boards for physicians and surgeons.

The proposals also make some minor corrections to the regulations. All changes to the existing regulations are shown in an underline/strikeout format.

The forum can be found at: <http://www.dir.ca.gov/Wcjudicial.htm>. Click on "current forums" at the top of the page.

Comments will be accepted on the forum until 5:00 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 29, 2010. Please feel free to participate in this important process.

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