

85.27 Services release of information charges payment debt collection prohibited.

1. The employer, for all injuries compensable under this chapter or chapter 85A, shall furnish reasonable surgical, medical, dental, osteopathic, chiropractic, podiatric, physical rehabilitation, nursing, ambulance and hospital services and supplies therefor and shall allow reasonably necessary transportation expenses incurred for such services. The employer shall also furnish reasonable and necessary crutches, artificial members and appliances but shall not be required to furnish more than one set of permanent prosthetic devices.
2. Any employee, employer or insurance carrier making or defending a claim for benefits agrees to the release of all information to which the employee, employer, or carrier has access concerning the employee's physical or mental condition relative to the claim and further waives any privilege for the release of the information. The information shall be made available to any party or the party's representative upon request. Any institution or person releasing the information to a party or the party's representative shall not be liable criminally or for civil damages by reason of the release of the information. If release of information is refused the party requesting the information may apply to the workers' compensation commissioner for relief. The information requested shall be submitted to the workers' compensation commissioner who shall determine the relevance and materiality of the information to the claim and enter an order accordingly.
3. Notwithstanding section 85.26, subsection 4, charges believed to be excessive or unnecessary may be referred by the employer, insurance carrier, or health service provider to the workers' compensation commissioner for determination, and the commissioner may utilize the procedures provided in sections 86.38 and 86.39, or set by rule, and conduct such inquiry as the commissioner deems necessary. Any health service provider charges not in dispute shall be paid directly to the health service provider prior to utilization of procedures provided in sections 86.38 and 86.39 or set by rule. A health service provider rendering treatment to an employee whose injury is compensable under this section agrees to be bound by such charges as allowed by the workers' compensation commissioner and shall not recover in law or equity any amount in excess of charges set by the commissioner. When a dispute under chapter 85, 85A, or 85B regarding reasonableness of a fee for medical services arises between a health service provider and an employer or insurance carrier, the health service provider, employer, or insurance carrier shall not seek payment from the injured employee.
4. For purposes of this section, the employer is obliged to furnish reasonable services and supplies to treat an injured employee, and has the right to choose the care. If the employer chooses the care, the employer shall hold the employee harmless for the cost of care until the employer notifies the employee that the employer is no longer authorizing all or any part of the care and the reason for the change in authorization. An employer is not liable for the cost of care that the employer arranges in response to a sudden emergency if the employee's condition, for which care was arranged, is not related to the employment. The treatment must be offered promptly and be reasonably suited to treat the injury without undue inconvenience to the employee. If the employee has reason to be dissatisfied with the care offered, the employee should communicate the basis of such dissatisfaction to the employer, in writing if requested, following which the employer and the employee may agree to alternate care reasonably suited to treat the injury. If the employer and employee cannot agree on such alternate care, the commissioner may, upon application and reasonable proofs of the necessity therefor, allow and order other care. In an emergency, the employee may choose the employee's care at the employer's expense, provided the employer or the employer's agent cannot be reached immediately. An application made under this subsection shall be considered an original proceeding for purposes of commencement and contested case proceedings under section 85.26. The hearing shall be conducted pursuant to chapter 17A. Before a hearing is scheduled, the parties may choose a telephone hearing or an in-person hearing. A request for an in-person hearing shall be approved unless the in-person hearing would be impractical because of the distance between the parties to the hearing. The workers' compensation commissioner shall issue a decision within ten working days of receipt of an application for alternate care made pursuant to a telephone hearing or within fourteen working days of receipt of an application for alternate care made pursuant to an in-person hearing. The employer shall notify an injured employee of the employee's ability to contest the employer's choice of care pursuant to this subsection.

5. When an artificial member or orthopedic appliance, whether or not previously furnished by the employer, is damaged or made unusable by circumstances arising out of and in the course of employment other than through ordinary wear and tear, the employer shall repair or replace it. When any crutch, artificial member or appliance, whether or not previously furnished by the employer, either is damaged or made unusable in conjunction with a personal injury entitling the employee to disability benefits, or services as provided by this section or is damaged in connection with employee actions taken which avoid such personal injury, the employer shall repair or replace it.

6. While a contested case proceeding for determination of liability for workers' compensation benefits is pending before the workers' compensation commissioner relating to an injury alleged to have given rise to treatment, no debt collection, as defined by section 537.7102, shall be undertaken against an employee or the employee's dependents for the collection of charges for that treatment rendered an employee by any health service provider. However, the health service provider may send one itemized written bill to the employee setting forth the amount of the charges in connection with the treatment after notification of the contested case proceeding.

7. If, after the third day of incapacity to work following the date of sustaining a compensable injury which does not result in permanent partial disability, or if, at any time after sustaining a compensable injury which results in permanent partial disability, an employee, who is not receiving weekly benefits under section 85.33 or section 85.34, subsection 1, returns to work and is required to leave work for one full day or less to receive services pursuant to this section, the employee shall be paid an amount equivalent to the wages lost at the employee's regular rate of pay for the time the employee is required to leave work. The employer shall make the payments under this subsection as wages to the employee after making such deductions from the amount as legally required or customarily made by the employer from wages. Payments made under this subsection shall be required to be reimbursed pursuant to any insurance policy covering workers' compensation. Payments under this subsection shall not be construed to be payment of weekly benefits.

[S13, § 2477-m9; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, § **1387**; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, § 85.27; 82 Acts, ch 1161, § 4]

92 Acts, ch 1120, § 1; 92 Acts, ch 1181, § 1; 94 Acts, ch 1065, §1, 2; 98 Acts, ch 1061, § 11; 2001 Acts, ch 87, §2; 2004 Acts, 1st Ex, ch 1001, §9, 18

2004 amendments to subsection 4 take effect September 7, 2004, and apply to injuries occurring on or after that date; 2004 Acts, 1st Ex, ch 1001, § 18