

Frequent Questions and Answers For Employers *Regarding Workers' Compensation Reform Bill SB 899*

What is SB 899?

SB 899 is a workers' compensation reform bill signed by Gov. Schwarzenegger in April, 2004. This legislation gives employers more control of medical care delivered to injured workers through Medical Provider Networks (MPN), reforms the determination of permanent disability, creates incentives for return to work programs, and includes many other changes.

What is a Medical Provider Network (MPN)?

An MPN is a network of medical care providers designated for treatment of work related injuries. Each MPN is required to have healthcare providers within a specified driving time or distance from the injured workers home or place of work: 30 minutes or 15 miles for providers and 60 minutes or 30 miles for specialists. This requirement did not exist before the reform.

What does SB 899 say about Medical Provider Networks (MPN)?

The employer has the right to direct the first appointment to a particular provider in the MPN and is required to do so within one day of injury. The injured worker can request a change of provider, within the network, after the initial appointment. If the injured worker disputes a diagnosis or treatment, the injured worker may request a second and a third opinion from physicians within the MPN.

What is the benefit of an MPN?

The key benefit is the ability to direct care (within the MPN) for the life of the claim, as compared to the previous limit of 30 days.

Will Farmers[®] Insurance Group have a certified MPN available in 2005?

Yes. Farmers has contracted with our current California medical network, First Health, to provide our MPN in 2005.

Does the employer need to establish his or her own network?

No. The filing we have submitted automatically covers Farmers' insured employers in California. Employers must use the designated MPN—First Health Primary Network. If no providers are available in the First Health Primary Network, the alternate is First Health Network. The telephone number to obtain the name of a doctor is 1-800-383-2763.

Can the employer choose the initial treatment provider?

Yes. In fact, employers are required to provide the initial appointments and to do so within one day of receiving notification from the injured worker. It is important to notify the **Farmers Claims Office** immediately so that we can arrange the appointment. The employee can change providers after the initial appointment but must choose a doctor from within the network.

Does the management of treatment change if you use an MPN?

Yes. Direction of care is for the life of the claim instead of the first 30 days. **This is a very important cost effective reform.**

Do employers have to provide anything to injured workers?

Yes. The reform contains this requirement for employers to give the following materials and information to the injured employee:

“At the time of referral for initial care, the insurer or employer shall notify the employee of his or her right to be treated by a physician of his or her choice within the MPN after the first visit with the MPN physician and the method by which the list of participating providers may be accessed by the employee”

We have enclosed information sheets that must be given to your present and future employees to satisfy this legal requirement. You must retain the original information sheets and the employees should keep a copy for their records.