

§ 97-25. Medical treatment and supplies.

(a) Medical compensation shall be provided by the employer.

(b) Upon the written request of the employee to the employer, the employer may agree to authorize and pay for a second opinion examination with a duly qualified physician licensed to practice in North Carolina, or licensed in another state if agreed to by the parties or ordered by the Commission. If, within 14 calendar days of the receipt of the written request, the request is denied or the parties, in good faith, are unable to agree upon a health care provider to perform a second opinion examination, the employee may request that the Industrial Commission order a second opinion examination. The expense thereof shall be borne by the employer upon the same terms and conditions as provided in this section for medical compensation.

(c) Provided, however, if the employee so desires, an injured employee may select a health care provider of the employee's own choosing to attend, prescribe, and assume the care and charge of the employee's case subject to the approval of the Industrial Commission. In addition, in case of a controversy arising between the employer and the employee, the Industrial Commission may order necessary treatment. In order for the Commission to grant an employee's request to change treatment or health care provider, the employee must show by a preponderance of the evidence that the change is reasonably necessary to effect a cure, provide relief, or lessen the period of disability. When deciding whether to grant an employee's request to change treatment or health care provider, the Commission may disregard or give less weight to the opinion of a health care provider from whom the employee sought evaluation, diagnosis, or treatment before the employee first requested authorization in writing from the employer, insurer, or Commission.

(d) The refusal of the employee to accept any medical compensation when ordered by the Industrial Commission shall bar the employee from further compensation until such refusal ceases, and no compensation shall at any time be paid for the period of suspension unless in the opinion of the Industrial Commission the circumstances justified the refusal. Any order issued by the Commission suspending compensation pursuant to G.S. 97-18.1 shall specify what action the employee should take to end the suspension and reinstate the compensation.

(e) If in an emergency on account of the employer's failure to provide medical compensation, a physician other than provided by the employer is called to treat the injured employee, the reasonable cost of such service shall be paid by the employer if so ordered by the Industrial Commission.

(f) In claims subject to G.S. 97-18(b) and (d), a party may file a motion as set forth in this subsection regarding a request for medical compensation or a dispute involving medical issues. The nonmoving party shall have the right to contest the motion. Motions and responses shall be submitted contemporaneously via electronic means to the Commission and to the opposing party or the opposing party's attorney, as follows:

- (1) A party may file a motion with the Executive Secretary for an administrative ruling regarding a request for medical compensation or a dispute involving medical issues. The motion shall be decided administratively pursuant to rules governing motions practices in contested cases. The Commission shall decide the motion within 30 days of the filing of the motion unless an extension of time to respond to the motion has been granted for good cause shown. Either party may file a motion for reconsideration of the administrative order with the Executive Secretary. Either party may request an expedited formal hearing pursuant to G.S. 97-84 and subdivision (2) of this subsection to appeal the decision of the Executive Secretary approving or denying the original motion or the motion for reconsideration. Within five days of the filing of a request for an expedited formal hearing pursuant to

G.S. 97-84 and subdivision (2) of this subsection to appeal the decision of the Executive Secretary, the Commission shall assign a Deputy Commissioner to conduct the formal hearing. The decision shall not be stayed during the pendency of an appeal pursuant to G.S. 97-84 and subdivision (2) of this subsection except under those circumstances set out in subdivision (4) of this subsection. A motion to stay shall be filed with the Deputy Commissioner scheduled to conduct the formal hearing pursuant to G.S. 97-84. Either party may appeal the decision of the Deputy Commissioner pursuant to G.S. 97-84 to the Full Commission pursuant to G.S. 97-85. The decision of the Deputy Commissioner shall not be stayed during the pendency of an appeal except under those circumstances set out in subdivision (4) of this subsection. A motion to stay the decision of the Deputy Commissioner pursuant to G.S. 97-84 shall be directed to the Chair of the Commission. The Full Commission shall render a decision on the appeal of the Deputy Commissioner's decision on the motion within 60 days of the filing of the notice of appeal.

- (2) In lieu of filing a motion with the Executive Secretary for an administrative ruling pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection, when appealing a ruling made pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection or when appealing an administrative ruling of the Chief Deputy or the Chief Deputy's designee on an emergency motion, a party may request a full evidentiary hearing pursuant to G.S. 97-84 on an expedited basis, limited to a request for medical compensation or a dispute involving medical issues, by filing a motion with the Office of the Chief Deputy Commissioner. The case will not be ordered into mediation based upon a party's request for hearing on the motion or appeal under this subdivision, except upon the consent of the parties. The Commission shall set the date of the expedited hearing, which shall be held within 30 days of the filing of the motion or appeal and shall notify the parties of the time and place of the hearing on the motion or appeal. Upon request, the Commission may order expedited discovery. The record shall be closed within 60 days of the filing of the motion, or in the case of an appeal pursuant to subdivisions (1) and (3) of this subsection, within 60 days of the filing of the appeal, unless the parties agree otherwise or the Commission so orders. Transcripts of depositions shall be expedited if necessary and paid pursuant to rules promulgated by the Commission related to depositions and shall be submitted electronically to the Commission. The Commission shall decide the issue in dispute and make findings of fact based upon the preponderance of the evidence in view of the entire record. The award, together with a statement of the findings of fact, rulings of law, and other matters pertinent to the questions at issue shall be filed with the record of the proceedings within 15 days of the close of the hearing record, and a copy of the award shall immediately be sent to the parties. Either party may appeal the decision of the Deputy Commissioner pursuant to G.S. 97-84 to the Full Commission pursuant to G.S. 97-85. The decision of the Deputy Commissioner pursuant to G.S. 97-84 shall not be stayed during the pendency of an appeal except under those circumstances set out in subdivision (4) of this subsection. A motion to stay the decision of the Deputy Commissioner pursuant to G.S. 97-84 shall be directed to the Chair of the Commission. The Full Commission shall render a decision on the

appeal of the Deputy Commissioner's decision on the motion within 60 days of the filing of the notice of appeal.

- (3) An emergency medical motion filed by either party shall be filed with the Office of the Chief Deputy Commissioner. The Chief Deputy or Chief Deputy's designee shall rule on the motion within five days of receipt unless the Chief Deputy or Chief Deputy's designee determines that the motion is not an emergency, in which case the motion shall be referred to the Executive Secretary for an administrative ruling pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection. Motions requesting emergency medical relief shall contain all of the following:

- a. An explanation of the medical diagnosis and treatment recommendation of the health care provider that requires emergency attention.
- b. A specific statement detailing the time-sensitive nature of the request to include relevant dates and the potential for adverse consequences to the movant if the recommended relief is not provided emergently.
- c. An explanation of opinions known and in the possession of the movant of additional medical or other relevant experts, independent medical examiners, and second opinion examiners.
- d. Documentation known and in the possession of the movant in support of the request, including relevant medical records.
- e. A representation that informal means of resolving the issue have been attempted.

Either party may appeal the decision of the Chief Deputy or the Chief Deputy's designee on the emergency motion by requesting an expedited formal hearing pursuant to G.S. 97-84 and subdivision (2) of this subsection to appeal the administrative decision of the Chief Deputy or the Chief Deputy's designee on the emergency motion. Within five days of the filing of a request for an expedited formal hearing pursuant to G.S. 97-84 and subdivision (2) of this subsection, the Commission shall assign a Deputy Commissioner to conduct the formal hearing. The decision of the Chief Deputy or the Chief Deputy's designee shall not be stayed during the pendency of an appeal of the administrative decision except under those circumstances set out in subdivision (4) of this subsection. Any motion to stay shall be filed with the Deputy Commissioner scheduled to conduct the expedited formal hearing pursuant to G.S. 97-84 and subdivision (2) of this subsection. Either party may appeal the decision of the Deputy Commissioner pursuant to G.S. 97-84 to the Full Commission pursuant to G.S. 97-85. If so, the decision of the Deputy Commissioner shall not be stayed during the pendency of an appeal except under those circumstances set out in subdivision (4) of this subsection. Any motion to stay the decision of the Deputy Commissioner pursuant to G.S. 97-84 shall be directed to the Chair of the Commission. The Full Commission shall render a decision on the appeal of the Deputy Commissioner's decision on the motion within 60 days of the filing of the notice of appeal.

- (4) The Commission shall consider, among other factors, all of the following when determining whether to grant a motion to stay filed pursuant to this subsection:

- a. Whether there would be immediate and irreparable injury, harm, loss, or damage to either party.

- b. The nature and cost of the medical relief sought.
 - c. The risk for further injury or disability to the employee inherent in the treatment or its delay.
 - d. Whether it has been recommended by an authorized physician.
 - e. Whether alternative therapeutic modalities are available and reasonable.
- (5) If the Commission determines that any party has acted unreasonably by initiating or objecting to a motion filed pursuant to this section, the Commission may assess costs associated with any proceeding, including any reasonable attorneys' fees and deposition costs, against the offending party.

(g), (h) Repealed by Session Laws 2014-77, s. 4, effective July 22, 2014. (1929, c. 120, s. 25; 1931, c. 274, s. 4; 1933, c. 506; 1955, c. 1026, s. 2; 1973, c. 520, s. 1; 1991, c. 703, s. 3; 1997-308, s. 1; 1999-150, s. 1; 2005-448, s. 6.2; 2011-287, s. 6; 2013-294, s. 4; 2014-77, s. 4; 2017-102, s. 15.)