

Texas Department of Insurance

COMP MINUTE

From the Division of Workers' Compensation

(CompMinute provides a briefing to Texas workers' compensation system participants on new initiatives underway at the Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation).

Division Enhances Referrals of Injured Employees for Vocational Assistance

(May 28, 2008) — The Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation (TDI-DWC) has enhanced the process for referring injured employees to vocational services, as directed by the Texas Legislature. Referrals to the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) are now occurring earlier in the workers' compensation claims process.

TDI-DWC will begin referring all injured employees to DARS who have received 12 weeks of Temporary Income Benefits (TIBs). This earlier referral will encourage injured employees to participate in the vocational resources offered by DARS.

Formerly, TDI-DWC issued referral letters to severely injured employees, usually 17 weeks prior to their eligibility for Supplemental Income Benefits (SIBs) and when specific types of injuries indicated the need for referral. The agency will continue to issue these referral letters with the addition of the new 12-week referral letter. TDI-DWC expects total referrals to increase from about 4,000 per year to about 24,000 per year.

A main goal of the workers' compensation system is to return Texans to work after a work-related injury or illness, when safe and medically appropriate. Changes to the TDI-DWC referral process for vocational services are in support of the system goal.

The new, 12-week referral letter will also provide injured employees information about services offered by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and the State's *211 Texas* program. These programs provide additional resources to injured employees for services, which include: job search, job training, counseling, child care, rent assistance and utility bill assistance.

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This CompMinute refers to the Goals, Legislative Intent; General Workers' Compensation Mission of Department statute (Texas Labor Code §402.021).