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North Carolina Industrial Commission

Industrial Commission Adopts Rules Combating the Opioid Epidemic in Workers' Compensation Cases

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Raleigh, N.C. – The North Carolina Industrial Commission is pleased to announce the adoption of rules for the workers' compensation system addressing the opioid crisis. The Commission convened on Tuesday, March 20, 2018, to deliberate and vote on the proposed rules. After thorough consideration of all public comments and feedback, the Commission adopted nine rules and filed them with the Rules Review Commission.

These rules for the utilization of opioids, related prescriptions, and pain management treatment are proactive measures aimed at curtailing opioid misuse and addiction in workers' compensation claims. The adopted rules are promulgated to ensure injured workers are provided the services and care intended by the Workers' Compensation Act and medical costs are adequately contained. "Opioid misuse and addiction are a major public health crisis in this state," said Chairman Allen. The adopted rules are intended to facilitate the timely and effective delivery of appropriate medical treatment for pain management in workers' compensation claims.

In February 2017, Chairman Allen established the North Carolina Workers' Compensation Opioid Task Force to study and recommend solutions for the problems arising from the intersection of the opioid epidemic and related issues in workers' compensation claims. After formation of the Opioid Task Force, the General Assembly passed Session Law 2017-203, Section 4(a), which authorized the Commission to adopt rules and guidelines, consistent with N.C. Gen. Stat. § 97-25.4, for the utilization of opioids, related prescriptions, and pain management treatment. Several months of research and stakeholder collaboration went into developing the proposed utilization rules. The Commission considered the recommendations of the Opioid Task Force and feedback received through preliminary public comment prior to proposing the rules. Following publication in the North Carolina Register on January 16, 2018, the Commission again encouraged public participation by holding a public hearing on March 2, 2018 and accepting written comments through March 19, 2018.

The adopted rules can be found on the Industrial Commission's website at <http://www.ic.nc.gov/adopted10MRules.html>. Any questions should be directed to Ms. Kendall Bourdon.

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