

April 4, 2017

## L&I contract eases access to Harborview services for chemically-exposed workers

As a part of the Department of Labor & Industries' commitment to helping workers and making it easier for our customers to do business with us, the agency recently signed a contract with the Center for Chemically-Related Illness at Harborview Medical Center. The contract will help workers with chemical exposures to access specialty evaluations — whether the workers are covered by L&I's State Fund or a self-insured (SI) employer.

Because Harborview is the State's designated center for the evaluation of chemically-related illnesses, staff already see patients with occupational exposures to chemicals. The recently-signed contract will help increase the number of comprehensive assessments that the Center can complete. Examples of services under the contract include expedited evaluations, detailed written reports on the chemically-related illnesses, and possible on-site visits by industrial hygienists for assessing exposures. More information about the services—including fees—can be found [within the contract](#).

### **How SI employers can help us refine criteria**

We are still working with Harborview to increase the staffing for assessments as well as to refine the criteria for services offered under the contract. As part of that process, we encourage the self-insured community to share feedback to help us refine the referral criteria (which include the diagnoses below as well as the claim circumstances listed in the following paragraph).

Initially, patients are being selected for referral under this contract from the following list of contended exposures or diagnoses:

- Toxic / heavy metal exposures, including beryllium
- Occupational asthma
- Occupational solvent exposure
- Pneumoconiosis
- Occupational cancer

### **Consider referring your workers early on**

L&I claim managers assigned to adjudicate chemically-related illness claims, and who work with claim managers in the Self-Insurance Program, may recommend referral under this contract in order to adjudicate chemical exposure claims. Evaluations by the Center for Chemically-Related Illness, however, are typically most beneficial before this stage of claim processing. Therefore, please consider referring your workers to the Center earlier, such as when:

- The claim needs specialty medical testing (e.g. beryllium lymphocyte proliferation testing).
- The CRI industrial hygienist is needed to assist with chemical exposure assessment.

- The claim requires additional causal analysis or determination of work-relatedness.
- There are contradictory medical findings and interpretations; diagnoses are conflicting or indeterminate.
- There are multiple contended exposures and/or conditions.

### **How can a referral help your worker?**

Harborview staff often consult in different capacities when there's a need for industrial hygiene services; an assessment of complex exposures; or analysis of causation related to contended chemical exposure or chemically-related illness. The goal of consultation is to provide an unbiased, highly credible assessment; evaluation at the Center for Chemically-Related Illness is not compulsory for workers, and they may continue to have their exposures and illness evaluated elsewhere.

### **How can a worker get evaluated at the Center?**

#### Referrals under the contract

For claims that meet current referral criteria under the contract, the self-insurer may request a contract referral to the Chemically-Related Illness Center by faxing the request to Harborview Medical Center at 206-744-8527. Contract referral requests must come directly from the self-insurer or their third party administrator (TPA). Self-insurers with specific questions for Harborview about the CRI program should call 206-744-9372 and ask to speak with the program coordinator.

From time to time, the Center may learn of a potential contract referral that has not been authorized by the self-insurer. In such cases, the staff at the Center will contact the self-insurer or TPA to request authorization before conducting an evaluation.

When workers contact the department with an interest in a referral to the Center, L&I is advising workers of self-insured employers to discuss referrals for these services with their employer or TPA.

#### Self-referrals

Workers can call Harborview directly at 1-877-520-5000 to make an appointment (they should mention that the visit is related to a workers' compensation claim). Please note: Injured workers who do not work with their employer for referral may not receive all of the services provided under the contract, such as expedited appointments.

### **Questions?**

Call LaNae Lien at L&I at 360-902-6968.