

THE PANEL OF PHYSICIANS

What is a posted Panel of Physicians?

A posted *Panel of Physicians* is a list of doctors from whom your employees may seek treatment if injured on the job. Although a minimum of six doctors are to be listed, representing six different medical practices, additional physicians are recommended. These doctors are to be updated on the most recent version of the State Board's Form WC-P1, which should be displayed along with the *Bill of Rights for the Injured Worker (WC-BOR)*.

The Georgia State Board of Workers' Compensation requires all employers to post these legal-sized documents in a conspicuous area in any location where employees are working. A Spanish version will also need to be posted for Spanish-speaking employees.

Who is to be included to ensure a valid Panel of Physicians?

A valid *Panel of Physicians* will comprise of no more than two industrial clinics, and at least one of the doctors listed should represent a minority group. An orthopedic surgeon is also to be included on the Panel. It is recommended that no less than two orthopedic practices be available to enhance the likelihood that the employees are able to obtain an appointment swiftly.

Why is a valid Panel of Physicians so important?

Besides being required by law, having a valid *Panel of Physicians* posted at all times is a vital component in controlling the cost of workers' compensation claims. Employees are required to seek treatment by physicians listed on the Panel. If a valid Panel is not in place at the time of a work-related injury, the employee will no longer be required to seek treatment with those on the Panel and may seek medical treatment from any physician of their choosing. When this occurs, the employer must pay for this treatment and will lose control over medical costs.

Furthermore, these providers will be able to treat and closely monitor the employees on a consistent basis, since they are familiar with the employer's Workers' Compensation program. They will be able to offer temporary transitional work assignments when warranted and will remain committed in returning the employee to work as quickly as possible.

Frequently Asked Questions about the Panel of Physicians

How does a valid Panel of Physicians benefit the employer?

A valid *Panel of Physicians* allows the employer to ensure that its employees are receiving quality, objective medical care from a physician familiar with Workers' Compensation, which in turn controls the cost of your Workers' Compensation claims and helps to minimize your premiums.

Is the employer required to post a valid Panel of Physician?

Yes. It is required by the Georgia State Board of Workers' Compensation. In the event that your Panel does not meet the requirements, your employees will be allowed to see any physician they choose. An invalid Panel may jeopardize eligibility for the ACCG Safety Incentive Discount Program.

Is the employer responsible for informing the employees of the posted Panel of Physicians?

Yes. The employees need to know the location of the Panel of Physicians at the time of hire. They are to be directed to the Panel of Physicians when they are injured and assisted in setting the appointments with the doctors of their choosing.

Must the Panel of Physicians be posted on pink paper?

No. It is recommended that it be posted on pink paper for easy identification; however, there will be no penalty if it is not.

Can several doctors from the same practice be placed on the Panel of Physicians?

Yes. However, if several different doctors are listed from one practice, physicians from five other practices will still need to be placed on the Panel. As an alternative, individual practices could be listed instead, and all doctors in that practice would be qualified to treat your employees.

What are the best practices regarding the selection of physicians?

Select those that will give the best medical care to your injured workers.

Do not select physicians that have the injured worker return time and again, with no apparent progress, when they possibly need to be seen by another doctor or specialist who is more knowledgeable in the proper treatment for the specific injury. The worker will get back to work sooner and the medical cost will be less.

How do I add or remove a Physician?

As an employer you are in control of your Panel and can choose to add or remove a physician at any time. Please be sure to coordinate all Panel changes with the Workers' Compensation claims staff at ACCG. They have partnered with an industry specialist to ensure your Panel is valid and in compliance with the State Board of Workers' Compensation. This specialist also maintains a database of all active Workers' Compensation providers within the State of Georgia.

Should the doctors be contacted that are placed on the Panel of Physicians?

Yes. The physicians will have to agree to be available for the employees under Workers' Compensation and be familiar with your *Return to Work Program* and your concern for the injured worker. The providers are to be contacted once every six months by the employer to determine that the doctors who are still practicing are giving the best medical care for the employees and doing a good job for the employer.

If even one doctor listed on the *Panel of Physicians* is not available to the employees, the Panel is no longer valid.

How often does the Panel of Physicians need to be updated?

The form itself needs to be updated whenever the *Georgia State Board of Workers' Compensation* revises its documents. The State Board requires that the most recent version of the *Panel of Physicians* and the *Bill of Rights for the Injured Worker* be used. The existing Panel will also need to be updated any time a change in physician or the medical practice is made.

Do older versions of the Panel of Physicians need to be retained when revisions are made?

Yes. A master copy of each updated *Panel of Physicians* with the effective date is to be filed. The particular Panel that was in place at the time of an employee's injury may need to be referenced.

Does the most recent version of the Bill of Rights for the Injured Worker need to be posted alongside the Panel of Physicians?

Yes. Otherwise, the *Panel of Physicians* may be deemed invalid.

Where may the forms for the Panel of Physicians and Bill of Rights be found?

Go to <http://sbwc.georgia.gov> and select "Forms" under "Publications and Forms."

If you have any questions, contact ACCG Claims Administration Services:
404-522-5222 or 877-421-6298