

ACT 245

S.B. NO. 1816

A Bill for an Act Relating to the Medical Claims Conciliation Panel.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:

SECTION 1. Section 671-12, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended to read as follows:

“§671-12¹ Review by panel required; notice; presentation of claims.

Effective July 1, 1976, any person or the person's representative claiming that a medical tort has been committed shall submit the claim to the medical claim conciliation panel before a suit based on the claim may be commenced in any court of this State. Claims shall be submitted to the medical claim conciliation panel [orally or] in writing [on forms provided by the panel. If the claim is presented orally, the panel shall reduce the claim to writing]. The claimant shall set forth facts upon which the claim is based and shall include the names of all parties against whom the claim is or may be made who are then known to the claimant. Within five business days thereafter the panel shall give notice of the claim, by certified mail, to all health care providers and others who are or may be parties to the claim and shall furnish copies of written claims to such persons. Such notice shall set forth a date, not more than twenty days after mailing the notice, within which any health care provider against whom a claim is made may file a written response to the claim, and a date and time, not less than five days following the last date for filing a response, for a hearing of the panel. Such notice shall describe the nature and purpose of the panel's proceedings and shall designate the place of the meeting. The times originally set forth in the notice may be enlarged by the chairperson, on due notice to all parties, for good cause.”

SECTION 2. Section 671-13, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended to read as follows:

“§671-13 Medical claim conciliation panel hearing; fact-finding; evidence; voluntary settlement. Every claim of a medical tort shall be heard by the medical claim conciliation panel within thirty days after the last date for filing a response. No persons other than the panel, witnesses, and consultants called by the panel, and the persons listed in section 671-14 shall be present except with the permission of the chairperson. The panel may, in its discretion, conduct an inquiry of a party, witness, or consultant without the presence of any or all parties.

The hearing shall be informal. Chapters 91 and 92 shall not apply. The panel may require a stenographic record of all or part of its proceedings for the use of the panel, but such record shall not be made available to the parties. The panel may receive any oral or documentary evidence. Questioning of parties, witnesses, and consultants may be conducted by the panel, and the panel may, in its discretion, permit any party, or any counsel for a party to question other parties, witnesses, or consultants. The panel may designate who, among the parties, shall have the burden of going forward with the evidence with respect to such issues as it may consider, and unless otherwise designated by the panel, when medical and hospital records have been provided the claimant for the claimant's proper review, such burden shall initially rest with the claimant at the commencement of the hearing.

The panel shall have the power to require by subpoena the appearance and testimony of witnesses and the production of documentary evidence. When such subpoena power is utilized, notice shall be given to all parties. The testimony of witnesses may be taken either orally before the panel or by deposition. In cases of refusal to obey a subpoena issued by the panel, the panel may invoke the aid of any circuit court in the State, which may issue an order requiring compliance with the subpoena. Failure to obey such order may be punished by the court as a contempt thereof. Any member of the panel, the director of the department, or any person designated by the director of the department may sign subpoenas. Any member of the panel may administer oaths and affirmations, examine witnesses, and receive evidence. Notwithstanding such powers, the panel shall attempt to secure the voluntary appearance, testimony, and cooperation of parties, witnesses, and consultants without coercion.

At the hearing of the panel and in arriving at its opinion the panel shall consider, but not be limited to, statements or testimony of witnesses, hospital and medical records, nurses' notes, x-rays, and other records kept in the usual course of the practice of the health care provider without the necessity for other identification or authentication, statement of fact, or opinion on a subject contained in a published treatise, periodical, book, or pamphlet, or statements of experts without the necessity of the experts appearing at the hearing. The panel may upon the application of any party or upon its own decision appoint as a consultant, an impartial and qualified physician, surgeon, physician and surgeon, or other professional person or expert to testify before the panel or to conduct any necessary professional or expert examination of the claimant or relevant evidentiary matter and to report to or testify as a witness thereto. Such a consultant shall not be compensated or reimbursed except for travel and living expenses to be paid as provided in section 671-11. [Discovery] Except for the production of hospital and medical records, nurses' notes, x-rays, and other records kept in the usual course of the practice of the health care provider, discovery by the parties shall not be allowed.

During the hearing and at any time prior to the rendition of an advisory decision pursuant to section 671-15, the panel may encourage the parties to settle or otherwise dispose of the case voluntarily."

SECTION 3. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed. New statutory material is underscored.

SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

(Approved June 8, 1989.)

Note

1. So in original.