

No. 2021-6927

Confidential Information Redacted
Texas Labor Code §§402.083 and 402.092

**Official Order
of the
Texas Commissioner of Workers' Compensation**

Date: 7/16/2021

Subject Considered:

Allmerica Financial Benefit Insurance Company
440 Lincoln Street
Worcester, Massachusetts 01653

Consent Order
DWC Enforcement File No. 24772

General remarks and official action taken:

This is a consent order with Allmerica Financial Benefit Insurance Company (Allmerica). The commissioner of the Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC) considers whether DWC should take disciplinary action against Allmerica.

Waiver

Allmerica acknowledges that the Texas Labor Code and other applicable laws provide certain rights. Allmerica waives all of these rights, and any other procedural rights that apply, in consideration of the entry of this consent order.

Findings of Fact

1. Allmerica holds a certificate of authority issued by the Texas Department of Insurance to transact the business of insurance pursuant to TEX. INS. CODE §§ 801.051-801.053 and is licensed to write workers' compensation/employers' liability insurance in Texas.

2. Allmerica was not selected to be tiered in the 2007, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, or 2018 Performance Based Oversight (PBO) assessments.

Failure to Pay Accrued Impairment Income Benefits Based on a Treating Doctor Report

3. On [REDACTED] Allmerica received a DWC Form-069, *Report of Medical Evaluation* from an injured employee's treating doctor (TD) in connection with a TD examination.
4. The TD determined that the injured employee reached maximum medical improvement on [REDACTED] with a [REDACTED] impairment rating.
5. Allmerica was required to pay accrued impairment income benefits (IIBs) no later than five days after receiving the TD's report. The deadline to pay benefits was [REDACTED]
6. Allmerica issued payment for IIBs on [REDACTED] which was 45 days late.

Assessment of Sanction

1. Failure to provide income benefits in a timely and cost-effective manner is harmful to injured employees and the Texas workers' compensation system.
2. In assessing the sanction for this case, DWC fully considered the following factors in TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.021(c) and 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 180.26(e):
 - the seriousness of the violation, including the nature, circumstances, consequences, extent, and gravity of the prohibited act;
 - the history and extent of previous administrative violations;
 - the violator's demonstration of good faith, including actions it took to rectify the consequences of the prohibited act;
 - the penalty necessary to deter future violations;
 - whether the administrative violation had a negative impact on the delivery of benefits to an injured employee;
 - the history of compliance with electronic data interchange requirements;
 - to the extent reasonable, the economic benefit resulting from the prohibited act; and
 - other matters that justice may require, including, but not limited to:
 - PBO assessments;

- prompt and earnest actions to prevent future violations;
 - self-report of the violation;
 - the size of the company or practice;
 - the effect of a sanction on the availability of health care; and
 - evidence of heightened awareness of the legal duty to comply with the Texas Workers' Compensation Act and DWC rules.
3. DWC found the following factor in TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.021(c) and 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 180.26(e) to be aggravating: whether the administrative violation had a negative impact on the delivery of benefits to an injured employee.
 4. DWC found the following factors in TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.021(c) and 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 180.26(e) to be mitigating: a history of no previous administrative violations and the violator's demonstration of good faith, including actions it took to rectify the consequences of the prohibited act.
 5. Allmerica acknowledges it communicated with DWC about the relevant statutes and rules it violated; the facts establish that the administrative violation occurred; and the proposed sanction is appropriate, including the factors DWC considered under TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.021(c) and 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 180.26(e).
 6. Allmerica acknowledges that, in assessing the sanction, DWC considered the factors in TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.021(c) and 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 180.26(e).

Conclusions of Law

1. The commissioner has jurisdiction over this matter pursuant to TEX. LAB. CODE §§ 402.001, 402.00114, 402.00116, 402.00128, 414.002, and 415.021.
2. The commissioner has the authority to dispose of this case informally pursuant to TEX. GOV'T CODE § 2001.056, TEX. LAB. CODE §§ 401.021 and 402.00128(b)(7), and 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 180.26(h).
3. Allmerica has knowingly and voluntarily waived all procedural rights to which it may have been entitled regarding the entry of this order, including, but not limited to, issuance and service of notice of intent to institute disciplinary action, notice of hearing, a public hearing, a proposal for decision, a rehearing by the commissioner, and judicial review.

4. Pursuant to TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.021, the commissioner may assess an administrative penalty against a person who commits an administrative violation.
5. Pursuant to TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.002(a)(20), an insurance carrier or its representative commits an administrative violation each time it violates a DWC rule.
6. Pursuant to TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.002(a)(22), an insurance carrier or its representative commits an administrative violation each time it fails to comply with a provision of the Texas Workers' Compensation Act.
7. Pursuant to TEX. LAB. CODE §§ 408.081, 409.023, and 415.002(a)(16), an insurance carrier must pay benefits weekly, as and when the benefits accrue, without order from the commissioner.
8. Pursuant to TEX. LAB. CODE § 408.121(b), an insurance carrier must pay IIBs no later than five days after the insurance carrier receives the doctor's report certifying maximum medical improvement.
9. Pursuant to 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 130.8, an insurance carrier must pay benefits in accordance with the TD's medical evaluation report no later than five days after receiving the TD's medical evaluation report when maximum medical improvement is not disputed.
10. Allmerica violated TEX. LAB. CODE §§ 409.023 and 415.002(a)(16), (20), and (22) when it failed to timely pay accrued income benefits in accordance with the TD's medical evaluation report no later than five days after receiving the report.

Order

It is ordered that Allmerica Financial Benefit Insurance Company must pay an administrative penalty of \$3,000 within 30 days from the date of this order. Allmerica Financial Benefit Insurance Company must pay the administrative penalty by company check, cashier's check, or money order and make it payable to the "State of Texas." Mail the administrative penalty to the Texas Department of Insurance, Attn: DWC Enforcement Section, MC AO-9999, P.O. Box 12030, Austin, Texas 78711-2030.



Cassie Brown
Commissioner of Workers' Compensation

Approved Form and Content:



Tyrus Housh
Staff Attorney, Enforcement
Compliance and Investigations
Division of Workers' Compensation

Confidential Information Redacted Texas Labor Code §§402.083 and 402.092

Affidavit

STATE OF Texas

§

COUNTY OF Harris

§

§

Before me, the undersigned authority, personally appeared Michael Berezin who being by me duly sworn, deposed as follows:

"My name is Michael Berezin. I am of sound mind, capable of making this statement, and have personal knowledge of these facts which are true and correct.

I hold the office of Director, Workers' Compensation Claims and am the authorized representative of Allmerica Financial Benefit Insurance Company. I am duly authorized by the organization to execute this statement.

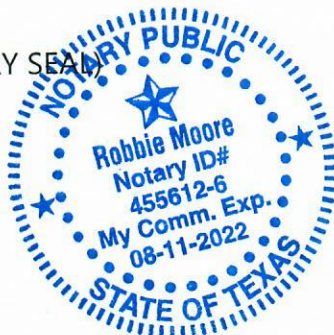
Allmerica Financial Benefit Insurance Company has knowingly and voluntarily entered into this consent order and agrees with and consents to the issuance and service of this consent order."



Affiant

SWORN TO AND SUBSCRIBED before me on June 15, 2021.

(NOTARY SEAL)



Robbie Moore
Signature of Notary Public

Robbie Moore
Printed Name of Notary Public

8-11-22
Commission Expiration