BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS CODE - BPC

DIVISION 2. HEALING ARTS [500 - 4999.129] *(Division 2 enacted by Stats. 1937, Ch. 399.)*

CHAPTER 1. General Provisions [500 - 865.2] *(Chapter 1 enacted by Stats. 1937, Ch. 399.)*

ARTICLE 1.5. Advocacy for Appropriate Health Care [510 - 512] *(Article 1.5 added by Stats. 1994, Ch. 1119, Sec. 1.)*

510. (a) The purpose of this section is to provide protection against retaliation for health care practitioners who advocate for appropriate health care for their patients pursuant to Wickline v. State of California 192 Cal. App. 3d 1630.

(b) It is the public policy of the State of California that a health care practitioner be encouraged to advocate for appropriate health care for his or her patients. For purposes of this section, “to advocate for appropriate health care” means to appeal a payer’s decision to deny payment for a service pursuant to the reasonable grievance or appeal procedure established by a medical group, independent practice association, preferred provider organization, foundation, hospital medical staff and governing body, or payer, or to protest a decision, policy, or practice that the health care practitioner, consistent with that degree of learning and skill ordinarily possessed by reputable health care practitioners with the same license or certification and practicing according to the applicable legal standard of care, reasonably believes impairs the health care practitioner’s ability to provide appropriate health care to his or her patients.

(c) The application and rendering by any individual, partnership, corporation, or other organization of a decision to terminate an employment or other contractual relationship with or otherwise penalize a health care practitioner principally for advocating for appropriate health care consistent with that degree of learning and skill ordinarily possessed by reputable health care practitioners with the same license or certification and practicing according to the applicable legal standard of care violates the public policy of this state.

(d) This section shall not be construed to prohibit a payer from making a determination not to pay for a particular medical treatment or service, or the services of a type of health care practitioner, or to prohibit a medical group, independent practice association, preferred provider organization, foundation, hospital medical staff, hospital governing body acting pursuant to Section 809.05, or payer from enforcing reasonable peer review or utilization review protocols or determining whether a health care practitioner has complied with those protocols.

(e) (1) Except as provided in paragraph (2), appropriate health care in a hospital licensed pursuant to Section 1250 of the Health and Safety Code shall be defined by the appropriate hospital committee and approved by the hospital medical staff and the governing body, consistent with that degree of learning and skill ordinarily possessed by reputable health care practitioners with the same license or certification and practicing according to the applicable legal standard of care.

(2) To the extent the issue is under the jurisdiction of the medical staff and its committees, appropriate health care in a hospital licensed pursuant to Section 1250 of the Health and Safety Code shall be defined by the hospital medical staff and approved by the governing body, consistent with that degree of learning and skill ordinarily possessed by reputable health care practitioners with the same license or certification and practicing according to the applicable legal standard of care.

(f) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit the governing body of a hospital from taking disciplinary actions against a health care practitioner as authorized by Sections 809.05, 809.4, and 809.5.

(g) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit the appropriate licensing authority from taking disciplinary actions against a health care practitioner.

(h) For purposes of this section, “health care practitioner” means a person who is described in subdivision (f) of Section 900 and who is either (1) a licentiate as defined in Section 805, or (2) a party to a contract with a payer whose decision, policy, or practice is subject to the advocacy described in subdivision (b), or (3) an individual designated in a contract with a payer whose decision, policy, or practice is subject to the advocacy described in subdivision (b), where the individual is granted the right to appeal denials of payment or authorization for treatment under the contract.

(i) Nothing in this section shall be construed to revise or expand the scope of practice of any health care practitioner, or to revise or expand the types of health care practitioners who are authorized to obtain medical staff privileges or to submit claims for reimbursement to payers.

(j) The protections afforded health care practitioners by this section shall be in addition to the protections available under any other law of this state.

(Added by Stats. 1994, Ch. 1119, Sec. 1. Effective January 1, 1995.)

511. (a) No subcontract between a physician and surgeon, physician and surgeon group, or other licensed health care practitioner who contracts with a health care service plan or health insurance carrier, and another physician and surgeon, physician and surgeon group, or licensed health care practitioner, shall contain any incentive plan that includes a specific payment made, in any type or form, to a physician and surgeon, physician and surgeon group, or other licensed health care practitioner as an inducement to deny, reduce, limit, or delay specific, medically necessary, and appropriate services covered under the contract with the health care service plan or health insurance carrier and provided with respect to a specific enrollee or groups of enrollees with similar medical conditions.

(b) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit subcontracts that contain incentive plans that involve general payments such as capitation payments or shared risk agreements that are not tied to specific medical decisions involving specific enrollees or groups of enrollees with similar medical conditions.

(Added by Stats. 1996, Ch. 1014, Sec. 1. Effective January 1, 1997.)

511.1. (a) In order to prevent the improper selling, leasing, or transferring of a health care provider's contract, it is the intent of the Legislature that every arrangement that results in a payor paying a health care provider a reduced rate for health care services based on the health care provider's participation in a network or panel shall be disclosed to the provider in advance and that the payor shall actively encourage beneficiaries to use the network, unless the health care provider agrees to provide discounts without that active encouragement.

(b) Beginning July 1, 2000, every contracting agent that sells, leases, assigns, transfers, or conveys its list of contracted health care providers and their contracted reimbursement rates to a payor, as defined in subparagraph (A) of paragraph (3) of subdivision (d), or another contracting agent shall, upon entering or renewing a provider contract, do all of the following:

(1) Disclose whether the list of contracted providers may be sold, leased, transferred, or conveyed to other payors or other contracting agents, and specify whether those payors or contracting agents include workers' compensation insurers or automobile insurers.

(2) Disclose what specific practices, if any, payors utilize to actively encourage a payor's beneficiaries to use the list of contracted providers when obtaining medical care that entitles a payor to claim a contracted rate. For purposes of this paragraph, a payor is deemed to have actively encouraged its beneficiaries to use the list of contracted providers if one of the following occurs:

(A) The payor's contract with subscribers or insureds offers beneficiaries direct financial incentives to use the list of contracted providers when obtaining medical care. "Financial incentives" means reduced copayments, reduced deductibles, premium discounts directly attributable to the use of a provider panel, or financial penalties directly attributable to the nonuse of a provider panel.

(B) The payor provides information directly to its beneficiaries, who are parties to the contract, or, in the case of workers' compensation insurance, the employer, advising them of the existence of the list of contracted providers through the use of a variety of advertising or marketing approaches that supply the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of contracted providers to beneficiaries in advance of their selection of a health care provider, which approaches may include, but are not limited to, the use of provider directories, or the use of toll-free telephone numbers or internet web site addresses supplied directly to every beneficiary. However, internet web site addresses alone shall not be deemed to satisfy the requirements of this subparagraph. Nothing in this subparagraph shall prevent contracting agents or payors from providing only listings of providers located within a reasonable geographic range of a beneficiary.

(3) Disclose whether payors to which the list of contracted providers may be sold, leased, transferred, or conveyed may be permitted to pay a provider's contracted rate without actively encouraging the payors' beneficiaries to use the list of contracted providers when obtaining medical care. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to require a payor to actively encourage the payor's beneficiaries to use the list of contracted providers when obtaining medical care in the case of an emergency.

(4) Disclose, upon the initial signing of a contract, and within 30 calendar days of receipt of a written request from a provider or provider panel, a payor summary of all payors currently eligible to claim a provider's contracted rate due to the provider's and payor's respective written agreements with any contracting agent.

(5) Allow providers, upon the initial signing, renewal, or amendment of a provider contract, to decline to be included in any list of contracted providers that is sold, leased, transferred, or conveyed to payors that do not actively encourage the payors' beneficiaries to use the list of contracted providers when obtaining medical care as described in paragraph (2). Each provider's election under this paragraph shall be binding on the contracting agent with which the provider has the contract and on any other contracting agent that buys, leases, or otherwise obtains the list of contracted providers. A provider shall not be excluded from any list of contracted providers that is sold, leased, transferred, or conveyed to payors that actively encourage the payors' beneficiaries to use the list of contracted providers when obtaining medical care, based upon the provider's refusal to be included on any list of contracted providers that is sold, leased, transferred, or conveyed to payors that do not actively encourage the payors' beneficiaries to use the list of contracted providers when obtaining medical care.

(6) Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to impose requirements or regulations upon payors, as defined in subparagraph (A) of paragraph (3) of subdivision (d).

(c) Beginning July 1, 2000, a payor, as defined in subparagraph (B) of paragraph (3) of subdivision (d), shall do all of the following:

(1) Provide an explanation of benefits or explanation of review that identifies the name of the plan or network that has a written agreement signed by the provider whereby the payor is entitled, directly or indirectly, to pay a preferred rate for the services rendered.

(2) Demonstrate that it is entitled to pay a contracted rate within 30 business days of receipt of a written request from a provider who has received a claim payment from the payor. The failure of a payor to make the demonstration within 30 business days shall render the payor responsible for the amount that the payor would have been required to pay pursuant to the contract between the payor and the beneficiary, which amount shall be due and payable within 10 business days of receipt of written notice from the provider, and shall bar the payor from taking any future discounts from that provider without the provider's express written consent until the payor can demonstrate to the provider that it is entitled to pay a contracted rate as provided in this paragraph. A payor shall be deemed to have demonstrated that it is entitled to pay a contracted rate if it complies with either of the following:

(A) Discloses the name of the network that has a written agreement with the provider whereby the provider agrees to accept discounted rates, and describes the specific practices the payor utilizes to comply with paragraph (2) of subdivision (b).

(B) Identifies the provider's written agreement with a contracting agent whereby the provider agrees to be included on lists of contracted providers sold, leased, transferred, or conveyed to payors that do not actively encourage beneficiaries to use the list of contracted providers pursuant to paragraph (5) of subdivision (b).

(d) For the purposes of this section, the following terms have the following meanings:

(1) "Beneficiary" means:

(A) For workers' compensation insurance, an employee seeking health care services for a work-related injury.

(B) For automobile insurance, those persons covered under the medical payments portion of the insurance contract.

(C) For group or individual health services covered through a health care service plan contract, including a specialized health care service plan contract, or a policy of disability insurance that covers hospital, medical, or surgical benefits, a subscriber, an enrollee, a policyholder, or an insured.

(2) "Contracting agent" means a third-party administrator or trust not licensed under the Health and Safety Code, the Insurance Code, or the Labor Code, a self-insured employer, a preferred provider organization, or an independent practice association, while engaged, for monetary or other consideration, in the act of selling, leasing, transferring, assigning, or conveying, a provider or provider panel to provide health care services to beneficiaries. For purposes of this section, a contracting agent shall not include a health care service plan, including a specialized health care service plan, an insurer licensed under the Insurance Code to provide disability insurance that covers hospital, medical, or surgical benefits, automobile insurance, or workers' compensation insurance, or a self-insured employer.

(3) (A) For purposes of subdivision (b), "payor" means a health care service plan, including a specialized health care service plan, an insurer licensed under the Insurance Code to provide disability insurance that covers hospital, medical, or surgical benefits, automobile insurance, workers' compensation insurance, or a self-insured employer that is responsible to pay for health care services provided to beneficiaries.

(B) For purposes of subdivision (c), "payor" means only those entities that provide coverage for hospital, medical, or surgical benefits that are not regulated under the Health and Safety Code, the Insurance Code, or the Labor Code.

(4) "Payor summary" means a written summary that includes the payor's name and the type of plan, including, but not limited to, a group health plan, an automobile insurance plan, and a workers' compensation insurance plan.

(5) “Provider” means any of the following:

(A) Any person licensed or certified pursuant to this division.

(B) Any person licensed pursuant to the Chiropractic Initiative Act or the Osteopathic Initiative Act.

(C) Any person licensed pursuant to Chapter 2.5 (commencing with Section 1440) of Division 2 of the Health and Safety Code.

(D) A clinic, health dispensary, or health facility licensed pursuant to Division 2 (commencing with Section 1200) of the Health and Safety Code.

(E) Any entity exempt from licensure pursuant to Section 1206 of the Health and Safety Code.

(e) This section shall become operative on July 1, 2000.

(Amended by Stats. 2000, Ch. 1069, Sec. 1. Effective January 1, 2001.)

511.3. (a) When a contracting agent sells, leases, or transfers a health provider’s contract to a payor, the rights and obligations of the provider shall be governed by the underlying contract between the health care provider and the contracting agent.

(b) For purposes of this section, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

(1) “Contracting agent” has the meaning set forth in paragraph (2) of subdivision (d) of Section 511.1.

(2) “Payor” has the meaning set forth in paragraph (3) of subdivision (d) of Section 511.1.

(Amended by Stats. 2004, Ch. 183, Sec. 1. Effective January 1, 2005.)

511.4. (a) A contracting agent, as defined in paragraph (2) of subdivision (d) of Section 511.1, shall beginning July 1, 2006, prior to contracting, annually thereafter on or before the contract anniversary date, and, in addition, upon the contracted provider’s written request, disclose to contracting providers all of the following information in an electronic format:

(1) The amount of payment for each service to be provided under the contract, including any fee schedules or other factors or units used in determining the fees for each service. To the extent that reimbursement is made pursuant to a specified fee schedule, the contract shall incorporate that fee schedule by reference, including the year of the schedule. For any proprietary fee schedule, the contract shall include sufficient detail that payment amounts related to that fee schedule can be accurately predicted.

(2) The detailed payment policies and rules and nonstandard coding methodologies used to adjudicate claims, which shall, unless otherwise prohibited by state law, do all of the following:

(A) When available, be consistent with Current Procedural Terminology (CPT), and standards accepted by nationally recognized medical societies and organizations, federal regulatory bodies, and major credentialing organizations.

(B) Clearly and accurately state what is covered by any global payment provisions for both professional and institutional services, any global payment provisions for all services necessary as part of a course of treatment in an institutional setting, and any other global arrangements, such as per diem hospital payments.

(C) At a minimum, clearly and accurately state the policies regarding all of the following:

(i) Consolidation of multiple services or charges and payment adjustments due to coding changes.

(ii) Reimbursement for multiple procedures.

(iii) Reimbursement for assistant surgeons.

(iv) Reimbursement for the administration of immunizations and injectable medications.

(v) Recognition of CPT modifiers.

(b) The information disclosures required by this section shall be in sufficient detail and in an understandable format that does not disclose proprietary trade secret information or violate copyright law or patented processes, so that a reasonable person with sufficient training, experience, and competence in claims processing can determine the payment to be made according to the terms of the contract.

(c) A contracting agent may disclose the fee schedules mandated by this section through the use of a Web site, so long as it provides written notice to the contracted provider at least 45 days prior to implementing a Web site transmission format or posting any changes to the information on the Web site.

(Added by Stats. 2005, Ch. 441, Sec. 2. Effective January 1, 2006.)

512. (a) Except as provided in subdivisions (b) and (c), no contract that is issued, amended, renewed, or delivered on or after January 1, 1999, between any person or entity, including, but not limited to, any group of physicians and surgeons, any medical group, any independent practice association (IPA), or any preferred provider organization (PPO), and a health care provider shall contain provisions that prohibit, restrict, or limit the health care provider from advertising.

(b) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit the establishment of reasonable guidelines in connection with the activities regulated pursuant to this division, including those to prevent advertising that is, in whole or in part, untrue, misleading, deceptive, or otherwise inconsistent with this division or the rules and regulations promulgated thereunder. For advertisements mentioning a provider's participation in a plan or product line of any person or entity, nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit requiring each advertisement to contain a disclaimer to the effect that the provider's services may be covered for some, but not all, plans or product lines of that person or entity, or that the person or entity may cover some, but not all, provider services.

(c) Nothing in this section is intended to prohibit provisions or agreements intended to protect service marks, trademarks, trade secrets, or other confidential information or property. If a health care provider participates on a provider panel or network as a result of a direct contractual arrangement with a person or entity, including, but not limited to, any group of physicians and surgeons, any medical group, any independent practice association, or any preferred provider organization, that, in turn, has entered into a direct contractual arrangement with another person or entity, pursuant to which enrollees, subscribers, insureds, and other beneficiaries of that other person or entity may receive covered services from the health care provider, then nothing in this section is intended to prohibit reasonable provisions or agreements in the direct contractual arrangement between the health care provider and the person or entity that protect the name or trade name of the other person or entity or require that the health care provider obtain the consent of the person or entity prior to the use of the name or trade name of the person or entity in any advertising by the health care provider.

(d) Nothing in this section shall be construed to impair or impede the authority of any state department to regulate advertising, disclosure, or solicitation pursuant to this division.

(Added by Stats. 1998, Ch. 523, Sec. 2. Effective January 1, 1999.)