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Mid-America Coalition Project Takes Collaborative Approach To Solving Workers Compensation Problem

The Mid American Coalition on Health Care (MACHC), working in conjunction with local physicians and business leaders, has created a model program to address issues related to workers compensation in Kansas City.

In 1974, the total cost of Workers Compensation cases was \$6 million. By 1990, the cost had skyrocketed to \$60 million and continues to increase by nearly 10 percent a year. This trend is compounded by the fact that medical costs of workers compensation are increasing twice as fast as per capita medical costs overall.

The "Cooperative Employer-Provider Medical Management and Early Return To Work" project is designed to reduce costs by returning injured workers back to work earlier and healthier by improving communication between employers, employees and physicians. Funding for this demonstration project was provided by the Robert

Wood Johnson Foundation.

MACHC's model program was designed with input from a variety of local groups involved in workers compensation, including major self-insured employers, risk managers, physicians, hospitals, labor unions, and insurers. It has evolved over the past four years and features a collaborative approach which promotes modified work duty arrangements, early return-to-work by injured employees, improved outcomes of care and higher satisfaction on the part of employees and supervisors.

At the present time, more than 26 major area employers, with more than 50,000 employees, are involved in this project. The centerpiece of the program is the "Uniform Workability Report Form" which physicians complete while examining an injured worker and return to his/her employer immediately following the office visit. The form is designed to improve communication and the flow

of information between physician, patient and employer. Its key elements include:

- *Initial diagnosis(es)
- *Treatment plan
- *Diagnostic tests/Referrals
- *Work status
- *Restricted activities
- *Initial Impression
- *Return visit

By using this form when treating a patient who has been injured at work, physicians will help improve communications between all parties regarding an employee's health and work status.

Kansas City area physicians are encouraged to support the MACHC workers compensation project by utilizing the Uniform Workability Report Form when treating injured employees of participating businesses. For more information about the project in general or the workability form in particular, contact MACHC at 753-2107.