

1 STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2 2nd Session of the 60th Legislature (2026)

3 SENATE BILL 1944

By: Murdock

6 AS INTRODUCED

7 An Act relating to the Administrative Workers'
8 Compensation Act; amending 85A O.S. 2021, Section 2,
9 as amended by Section 1, Chapter 135, O.S.L. 2025
10 (85A O.S. Supp. 2025, Section 2), which relates to
definitions; modifying definition; and providing an
effective date.

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12 BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

13 SECTION 1. AMENDATORY 85A O.S. 2021, Section 2, as
14 amended by Section 1, Chapter 135, O.S.L. 2025 (85A O.S. Supp. 2025,
15 Section 2), is amended to read as follows:

16 Section 2. As used in the Administrative Workers' Compensation
17 Act:

18 1. "Actually dependent" means a surviving spouse, a child or
19 any other person who receives one-half (1/2) or more of his or her
20 support from the employee;

21 2. "Carrier" means any stock company, mutual company, or
22 reciprocal or interinsurance exchange authorized to write or carry
23 on the business of workers' compensation insurance in this state.

1 Whenever required by the context, the term carrier shall be deemed
2 to include duly qualified self-insureds or self-insured groups;

3 3. "Case management" means the ongoing coordination, by a case
4 manager, of health care services provided to an injured or disabled
5 worker, including but not limited to systematically monitoring the
6 treatment rendered and the medical progress of the injured or
7 disabled worker; ensuring that any treatment plan follows all
8 appropriate treatment protocols, utilization controls and practice
9 parameters; assessing whether alternative health care services are
10 appropriate and delivered in a cost-effective manner based upon
11 acceptable medical standards; and ensuring that the injured or
12 disabled worker is following the prescribed health care plan;

13 4. "Case manager" means a person who is a registered nurse with
14 a current, active unencumbered license from the Oklahoma Board of
15 Nursing, or possesses one or more of the following certifications
16 which indicate the individual has a minimum number of years of case
17 management experience, has passed a national competency test and
18 regularly obtains continuing education hours to maintain
19 certification:

20 a. Certified Disability Management Specialist (CDMS),
21 b. Certified Case Manager (CCM),
22 c. Certified Rehabilitation Registered Nurse (CRRN),
23 d. Case Manager - Certified (CMC),
24 e. Certified Occupational Health Nurse (COHN), or

f. Certified Occupational Health Nurse Specialist (COHN-S);

5. "Certified workplace medical plan" means an organization of health care providers or any other entity, certified by the State Commissioner of Health, that is authorized to enter into a contractual agreement with an employer, a group self-insurance association plan, an employer's workers' compensation insurance carrier, a third-party administrator or an insured to provide medical care under the Administrative Workers' Compensation Act. Certified plans shall only include plans which provide medical services and payment for services on a fee-for-service basis to medical providers;

6. "Child" means a natural or adopted son or daughter of the employee under eighteen (18) years of age; or a natural or adopted son or daughter of an employee eighteen (18) years of age or over who is physically or mentally incapable of self-support; or any natural or adopted son or daughter of an employee eighteen (18) years of age or over who is actually dependent; or any natural or adopted son or daughter of an employee between eighteen (18) and twenty-three (23) years of age who is enrolled as a full-time student in any accredited educational institution. The term child includes a posthumous child, a child legally adopted or one for whom adoption proceedings are pending at the time of death, an actually

1 dependent stepchild or an actually dependent acknowledged child born
2 out of wedlock;

3 7. "Claimant" means a person who claims benefits for an injury
4 or occupational disease pursuant to the provisions of the
5 Administrative Workers' Compensation Act;

6 8. "Commission" means the Oklahoma Workers' Compensation
7 Commission;

8 9. a. "Compensable injury" means damage or harm to the
9 physical structure of the body, or damage or harm to
10 prosthetic appliances, including eyeglasses, contact
11 lenses, or hearing aids, of which the major cause is
12 either an accident, cumulative trauma or occupational
13 disease arising out of the course and scope of
14 employment. An "accident" means an event involving
15 factors external to the employee that:

- 16 (1) was unintended, unanticipated, unforeseen,
17 unplanned and unexpected,
- 18 (2) occurred at a specifically identifiable time and
19 place,
- 20 (3) occurred by chance or from unknown causes, or
- 21 (4) was independent of sickness, mental incapacity,
22 bodily infirmity or any other cause.

23 b. Compensable injury does not include:

- (1) injury to any active participant in assaults or combats which, although they may occur in the workplace, are the result of non-employment-related hostility or animus of one, both, or all of the combatants and which assault or combat amounts to a deviation from customary duties; provided, however, injuries caused by horseplay shall not be considered to be compensable injuries, except for innocent victims,
- (2) injury incurred while engaging in or performing or as the result of engaging in or performing any recreational or social activities for the employee's personal pleasure,
- (3) injury which was inflicted on the employee at a time when employment services were not being performed or before the employee was hired or after the employment relationship was terminated,
- (4) injury if the accident was caused by the use of alcohol, illegal drugs, or prescription drugs used in contravention of physician's orders. If a biological specimen is collected within twenty-four (24) hours of the employee being injured or reporting an injury, or if at any time after the injury a biological specimen is collected by the

Office of the Chief Medical Examiner if the injured employee does not survive for at least twenty-four (24) hours after the injury and the employee tests positive for intoxication, an illegal controlled substance, or a legal controlled substance used in contravention to a treating physician's orders, or refuses to undergo the drug and alcohol testing, there shall be a rebuttable presumption that the injury was caused by the use of alcohol, illegal drugs, or prescription drugs used in contravention of physician's orders. This presumption may only be overcome if the employee proves by clear and convincing evidence that his or her state of intoxication had no causal relationship to the injury,

(5) any strain, degeneration, damage or harm to, or disease or condition of, the eye or musculoskeletal structure or other body part resulting from the natural results of aging, osteoarthritis, arthritis, or degenerative process including, but not limited to, degenerative joint disease, degenerative disc disease, degenerative

spondylosis/spondylolisthesis and spinal stenosis, or

(6) any preexisting condition except when the treating physician clearly confirms an identifiable and significant aggravation incurred in the course and scope of employment.

- c. A compensable injury shall be established by medical evidence supported by objective findings as defined in paragraph 31 of this section.

d. The injured employee shall prove by a preponderance of the evidence that he or she has suffered a compensable injury.

- e. Benefits shall not be payable for a condition which results from a non-work-related independent intervening cause following a compensable injury which causes or prolongs disability or aggravation or requires treatment. A non-work-related independent intervening cause does not require negligence or recklessness on the part of a claimant.

f. An employee who suffers a compensable injury shall be entitled to receive compensation as prescribed in the Administrative Workers' Compensation Act.

Notwithstanding other provisions of law, if it is determined that a compensable injury did not occur,

the employee shall not be entitled to compensation under the Administrative Workers' Compensation Act;

10. "Compensation" means the money allowance payable to the employee or to his or her dependents and includes the medical services and supplies provided for in Section 50 of this title and funeral expenses;

11. "Consequential injury" means injury or harm to a part of the body that is a direct result of the injury or medical treatment to the part of the body originally injured in the claim. The Commission shall not make a finding of a consequential injury unless it is established by objective medical evidence that medical treatment for such part of the body is required;

12. "Continuing medical maintenance" means medical treatment that is reasonable and necessary to maintain a claimant's condition resulting from the compensable injury or illness after reaching maximum medical improvement. Continuing medical maintenance shall not include diagnostic tests, surgery, injections, counseling, physical therapy, or pain management devices or equipment;

13. "Course and scope of employment" means an activity of any kind or character for which the employee was hired and that relates to and derives from the work, business, trade or profession of an employer, and is performed by an employee in the furtherance of the affairs or business of an employer. The term includes activities conducted on the premises of an employer or at other locations

1 designated by an employer and travel by an employee in furtherance
2 of the affairs of an employer that is specifically directed by the
3 employer. This term does not include:

- 4 a. an employee's transportation to and from his or her
5 place of employment,
- 6 b. travel by an employee in furtherance of the affairs of
7 an employer if the travel is also in furtherance of
8 personal or private affairs of the employee,
- 9 c. any injury occurring in a parking lot or other common
10 area adjacent to an employer's place of business
11 before the employee clocks in or otherwise begins work
12 for the employer or after the employee clocks out or
13 otherwise stops work for the employer unless the
14 employer owns or maintains exclusive control over the
15 area, or
- 16 d. any injury occurring while an employee is on a work
17 break, unless the injury occurs while the employee is
18 on a work break inside the employer's facility or in
19 an area owned by or exclusively controlled by the
20 employer and the work break is authorized by the
21 employee's supervisor;

22 14. "Cumulative trauma" means an injury to an employee that is
23 caused by the combined effect of repetitive physical activities
24 extending over a period of time in the course and scope of

1 employment. Cumulative trauma shall not mean fatigue, soreness or
2 general aches and pain that may have been caused, aggravated,
3 exacerbated or accelerated by the employee's course and scope of
4 employment. Cumulative trauma shall have resulted directly and
5 independently of all other causes;

6 15. "Death" means only death resulting from compensable injury
7 as defined in paragraph 9 of this section;

8 16. "Disability" means incapacity because of compensable injury
9 to earn, in the same or any other employment, substantially the same
10 amount of wages the employee was receiving at the time of the
11 compensable injury;

12 17. "Drive-away operations" includes every person engaged in
13 the business of transporting and delivering new or used vehicles by
14 driving, either singly or by towbar, saddle-mount or full-mount
15 method, or any combination thereof, with or without towing a
16 privately owned vehicle;

17 18. a. "Employee" means any person, including a minor, in the
18 service of an employer under any contract of hire or
19 apprenticeship, written or oral, expressed or implied,
20 but excluding one whose employment is casual and not
21 in the course of the trade, business, profession, or
22 occupation of his or her employer and excluding one
23 who is required to perform work for a municipality or
24 county or the state or federal government on having

been convicted of a criminal offense or while incarcerated. Employee shall also include a member of the Oklahoma National Guard while in the performance of duties only while in response to state orders and any authorized voluntary or uncompensated worker, rendering services as a firefighter, law enforcement officer or emergency management worker. Travel by a police officer, fireman, or a member of a first aid or rescue squad, in responding to and returning from an emergency, shall be deemed to be in the course of employment.

b. The term employee shall not include:

(1) any person for whom an employer is liable under any Act of Congress for providing compensation to employees for injuries, disease or death arising out of and in the course of employment including, but not limited to, the Federal Employees' Compensation Act, the Federal Employers'

(2) any person who is employed in agriculture, ranching, or horticulture by an employer who had a gross annual payroll in the preceding calendar

year of less than One Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$150,000.00) wages per each Farm Service Agency number or account for agricultural, ranching or horticultural workers, or any person who is employed in agriculture, ranching or horticulture who is not engaged in operation of motorized machines. This exemption applies to any period of time for which such employment exists, irrespective of whether or not the person is employed in other activities for which the exemption does not apply. If the person is employed for part of a year in exempt activities and for part of a year in nonexempt activities, the employer shall be responsible for providing workers' compensation only for the period of time for which the person is employed in nonexempt activities,

- (3) any person who is a licensed real estate sales associate or broker, paid on a commission basis,
- (4) any person employed by an employer with five or fewer total employees, all of whom are related within the second degree by blood or marriage to the employer, all of whom are dependents living in the household of the employer, or all of whom

are a combination of such relatives and dependents. If the employer is not a natural person such relative shall be related within the second degree by blood or marriage to a person who owns fifty percent (50%) or more of the employer, or such dependent shall be in the household of a person who owns fifty percent (50%) or more of the employer,

- (5) any person employed by an employer which is a youth sports league which qualifies for exemption from federal income taxation pursuant to federal law,
- (6) sole proprietors, members of a partnership, individuals who are party to a franchise agreement as set out by the Federal Trade Commission franchise disclosure rule, 16 CFR 436.1 through 436.11, members of a limited liability company who own at least ten percent (10%) of the capital of the limited liability company or any stockholder-employees of a corporation who own ten percent (10%) or more stock in the corporation, unless they elect to be covered by a policy of insurance covering

benefits under the Administrative Workers' Compensation Act,

- (7) any person providing or performing voluntary service who receives no wages for the services other than meals, drug or alcohol rehabilitative therapy, transportation, lodging or reimbursement for incidental expenses except for volunteers specifically provided for in subparagraph a of this paragraph,
- (8) a person, commonly referred to as an owner-operator, who owns or leases a truck-tractor or truck for hire, if the owner-operator actually operates the truck-tractor or truck and if the person contracting with the owner-operator is not the lessor of the truck-tractor or truck. Provided, however, an owner-operator shall not be precluded from workers' compensation coverage under the Administrative Workers' Compensation Act if the owner-operator elects to participate as a sole proprietor,
- (9) a person referred to as a drive-away owner-operator who privately owns and utilizes a tow vehicle in drive-away operations and operates independently for hire, if the drive-away owner-

operator actually utilizes the tow vehicle and if the person contracting with the drive-away owner-operator is not the lessor of the tow vehicle.

Provided, however, a drive-away owner-operator

shall not be precluded from workers' compensation coverage under the Administrative Workers'

Compensation Act if the drive-away owner-operator elects to participate as a sole proprietor,

(10) any person who is employed as a domestic servant or as a casual worker in and about a private home or household, which private home or household had a gross annual payroll in the preceding calendar year of less than Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,000.00) for such workers, and

(11) any person who is a dependent child of an owner of a farm, ranch, livestock market, or other agricultural business and the dependent child is employed by such;

19. "Employer" means a natural person, partnership,

association, limited liability company, corporation, and the legal representatives of a deceased employer, or the receiver or trustee of a person, partnership, association, corporation, or limited liability company, departments, instrumentalities and institutions of this state and divisions thereof, counties and divisions thereof.

1 public trusts, boards of education and incorporated cities or towns
2 and divisions thereof, employing a person included within the term
3 employee as defined in this section. Employer may also mean the
4 employer's workers' compensation insurance carrier, if applicable.
5 Except as provided otherwise, the Administrative Workers'
6 Compensation Act applies to all public and private entities and
7 institutions;

8 20. "Employment" includes work or labor in a trade, business,
9 occupation or activity carried on by an employer or any authorized
10 voluntary or uncompensated worker rendering services as a
11 firefighter, peace officer or emergency management worker;

12 21. "Evidence-based" means expert-based, literature-supported
13 and outcomes validated by well-designed randomized trials when such
14 information is available and which uses the best available evidence
15 to support medical decision making;

16 22. "Gainful employment" means the capacity to perform
17 employment for wages for a period of time that is not part-time,
18 occasional or sporadic;

19 23. "Impaired self-insurer" means a private self-insurer or
20 group self-insurance association that fails to pay its workers'
21 compensation obligations, or is financially unable to do so and is
22 the subject of any proceeding under the Federal Bankruptcy Reform
23 Act of 1978, and any subsequent amendments or is the subject of any
24 proceeding in which a receiver, custodian, liquidator,

1 rehabilitator, trustee or similar officer has been appointed by a
2 court of competent jurisdiction to act in lieu of or on behalf of
3 the self-insurer;

4 24. "Incapacity" means inadequate strength or ability to
5 perform a work-related task;

6 25. "Insurance Commissioner" means the Insurance Commissioner
7 of this state;

8 26. "Insurance Department" means the Insurance Department of
9 this state;

10 27. "Major cause" means more than fifty percent (50%) of the
11 resulting injury, disease or illness. A finding of major cause
12 shall be established by a preponderance of the evidence. A finding
13 that the workplace was not a major cause of the injury, disease or
14 illness shall not adversely affect the exclusive remedy provisions
15 of the Administrative Workers' Compensation Act and shall not create
16 a separate cause of action outside the Administrative Workers'
17 Compensation Act;

18 28. "Maximum medical improvement" means that no further
19 material improvement would reasonably be expected from medical
20 treatment or the passage of time;

21 29. "Medical services" means those services specified in
22 Section 50 of this title;

23 30. "Misconduct" shall include the following:

24 a. unexplained absenteeism or tardiness,

- b. willful or wanton indifference to or neglect of the duties required,
- c. willful or wanton breach of any duty required by the employer,
- d. the mismanagement of a position of employment by action or inaction,
- e. actions or omissions that place in jeopardy the health, life, or property of self or others,
- f. dishonesty,
- g. wrongdoing,
- h. violation of a law, or
- i. violation of a policy or rule adopted to ensure orderly work or the safety of self or others;

31. a. (1) "Objective findings" are those findings which cannot come under the voluntary control of the patient.

(2) (a) When determining permanent disability, a physician, any other medical provider, an administrative law judge, the Commission or the courts shall not consider complaints of pain.

(b) For the purpose of making permanent disability ratings to the spine, physicians shall use criteria established by the Sixth

Edition of the American Medical Association
"Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent
Impairment".

(3) (a) Objective evidence necessary to prove permanent disability in occupational hearing loss cases may be established by medically recognized and accepted clinical diagnostic methodologies, including, but not limited to, audiological tests that measure air and bone conduction thresholds and speech discrimination ability.

(b) Any difference in the baseline hearing levels shall be confirmed by subsequent testing; provided, however, such test shall be given within four (4) weeks of the initial baseline hearing level test but not before five (5) days after being adjusted for presbycusis.

b. Medical opinions addressing compensability and permanent disability shall be stated within a reasonable degree of medical certainty;

32. "Official Disability Guidelines" or "ODG" means the current version of the Official Disability Guidelines and the ODG Treatment

1 33. "Permanent disability" means the extent, expressed as a
2 percentage, of the loss of a portion of the total physiological
3 capabilities of the human body as established by competent medical
4 evidence and based on the Sixth Edition of the American Medical
5 Association "Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment", if
6 the impairment is contained therein;

7 34. "Permanent partial disability" means a permanent disability
8 or loss of use after maximum medical improvement has been reached
9 which prevents the injured employee, who has been released to return
10 to work by the treating physician, from returning to his or her pre-
11 injury or equivalent job. All evaluations of permanent partial
12 disability must be supported by objective findings;

13 35. "Permanent total disability" means, based on objective
14 findings, incapacity, based upon accidental injury or occupational
15 disease, to earn wages in any employment for which the employee may
16 become physically suited and reasonably fitted by education,
17 training, experience or vocational rehabilitation provided under the
18 Administrative Workers' Compensation Act. Loss of both hands, both
19 feet, both legs, or both eyes, or any two thereof, shall constitute
20 permanent total disability;

21 36. "Preexisting condition" means any illness, injury, disease,
22 or other physical or mental condition, whether or not work-related,
23 for which medical advice, diagnosis, care or treatment was
24 recommended or received preceding the date of injury;

1 37. "Pre-injury or equivalent job" means the job that the
2 claimant was working for the employer at the time the injury
3 occurred or any other employment offered by the claimant's employer
4 that pays at least one hundred percent (100%) of the employee's
5 average weekly wage;

6 38. "Private self-insurer" means a private employer that has
7 been authorized to self-insure its workers' compensation obligations
8 pursuant to the Administrative Workers' Compensation Act, but does
9 not include group self-insurance associations authorized by the
10 Administrative Workers' Compensation Act, or any public employer
11 that self-insures pursuant to the Administrative Workers'
12 Compensation Act;

13 39. "Prosthetic" means an artificial device used to replace a
14 part or joint of the body that is lost or injured in an accident or
15 illness covered by the Administrative Workers' Compensation Act;

16 40. "Scheduled member" or "member" means hands, fingers, arms,
17 legs, feet, toes, and eyes. In addition, for purposes of the
18 Multiple Injury Trust Fund only, scheduled member means hearing
19 impairment;

20 41. "Scientifically based" involves the application of
21 rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable
22 and valid knowledge relevant to medical testing, diagnoses and
23 treatment; is adequate to justify the general conclusions drawn; and
24 has been accepted by a peer-review journal or approved by a panel of

1 independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective, and
2 scientific review;

3 42. "State average weekly wage" means the state average weekly
4 wage determined by the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission in
5 the preceding calendar year. If such determination is not
6 available, the Commission shall determine the wage annually after
7 reasonable investigation;

8 43. "Subcontractor" means a person, firm, corporation or other
9 legal entity hired by the general or prime contractor to perform a
10 specific task for the completion of a work-related activity;

11 44. "Surgery" does not include an injection, or the forcing of
12 fluids beneath the skin, for treatment or diagnosis;

13 45. "Surviving spouse" means the employee's spouse by reason of
14 a legal marriage recognized by this state or under the requirements
15 of a common law marriage in this state, as determined by the
16 Oklahoma Workers' Compensation Commission;

17 46. "Temporary partial disability" means an injured employee
18 who is temporarily unable to perform his or her job, but may perform
19 alternative work offered by the employer;

20 47. "Time of accident" or "date of accident" means the time or
21 date of the occurrence of the accidental incident from which
22 compensable injury, disability, or death results; and

23 48. "Wages" means money compensation received for employment at
24 the time of the accident, including the reasonable value of board,

1 rent, housing, lodging, or similar advantage received from the
2 employer and includes the amount of tips required to be reported by
3 the employer under Section 6053 of the Internal Revenue Code and the
4 regulations promulgated pursuant thereto or the amount of actual
5 tips reported, whichever amount is greater.

6 SECTION 2. This act shall become effective November 1, 2026.

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