



March 26, 2020

Dear Member:

We remain thankful for all of your efforts to keep Alabama healthy in the midst of these uncertain times. For our part, we continue to process claims, provide timely benefits, and promptly respond to all of your inquiries. We know that your employees are your greatest asset and we are here to serve.

As the pandemic continues, the public and private sector continue to evolve in terms of response to the ongoing challenges. In that regard, we want to make you aware of the following:

1. Telemedicine – As you all know, telemedicine has been encouraged as an alternate method of interaction between patients and medical providers. The website, www.albme.org, for the Alabama Board of Medical Examiners has encouraged practitioners to utilize telehealth visits whenever prudent. We suggest that you regularly check their website, as well as those of the Alabama Department of Public Health, www.alabamapublichealth.gov, and CDC, www.cdc.gov, to obtain the latest recommendations. For our part, we intend to let injured workers know that telemedicine is an option potentially available to them. We will be working closely with our nurse case managers to make certain they know that we support this option when medically appropriate per the provider. Our goal is that none of your employees experience any unnecessary delay in treatment.
2. Pending Workers' Compensation Lawsuits – You may know that the Chief Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court has issued various orders governing existing litigation. Certain court proceedings have been suspended through April 16, 2020. We will be working with our assigned defense attorneys to make certain that this temporary delay does not prevent us from resolving matters.
3. Workers' Compensation Settlements – The Chief Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court has also issued orders related to workers' compensation settlement hearings, allowing the parties to utilize telephone or video conference options. In regard to mediations, Steve Garrett, Director of the Alabama Department of Labor Workers' Compensation Division, has issued a memorandum asking that previously scheduled mediations and Benefit Review Conferences be postponed through at least April 6, 2020; however, his memorandum also provides that mediations or Benefit Review Conferences may be held by telephone whenever possible if they cannot be rescheduled. We are continuing to monitor all of these developments to make certain that your claims are processed and concluded in the timeliest manner possible under the circumstances.

We are grateful for all of you in this challenging time. As always, if you have any questions, or wish for us to review any particular situation, please feel free to reach out to me via email at scole@hwcf.net or your assigned Adjuster. Stay Safe!

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shannon Cole". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Shannon Cole
Director of Operations