

WORKER'S DISABILITY COMPENSATION ACT OF 1969 (EXCERPT)
Act 317 of 1969

418.401 Definitions; determination of entitlement to weekly wage lost benefits; notice of employee refusing offer of employment; termination of benefits; "reasonable employment" defined; personal injuries or work related diseases to which section applicable.

Sec. 401. (1) As used in this chapter, "disability" means a limitation of an employee's wage earning capacity in work suitable to his or her qualifications and training resulting from a personal injury or work related disease. A limitation of wage earning capacity occurs only if a personal injury covered under this act results in the employee's being unable to perform all jobs paying the maximum wages in work suitable to that employee's qualifications and training, which includes work that may be performed using the employee's transferable work skills. A disability is total if the employee is unable to earn in any job paying maximum wages in work suitable to the employee's qualifications and training. A disability is partial if the employee retains a wage earning capacity at a pay level less than his or her maximum wages in work suitable to his or her qualifications and training. The establishment of disability does not create a presumption of wage loss.

(2) As used in this chapter:

(a) "Disablement" means the event of becoming so disabled.

(b) "Personal injury" includes a disease or disability that is due to causes and conditions that are characteristic of and peculiar to the business of the employer and that arises out of and in the course of the employment. An ordinary disease of life to which the public is generally exposed outside of the employment is not compensable. A personal injury under this act is compensable if work causes, contributes to, or aggravates pathology in a manner so as to create a pathology that is medically distinguishable from any pathology that existed prior to the injury. Mental disabilities and conditions of the aging process, including but not limited to heart and cardiovascular conditions, and degenerative arthritis shall be compensable if contributed to or aggravated or accelerated by the employment in a significant manner. Mental disabilities shall be compensable when arising out of actual events of employment, not unfounded perceptions thereof, and if the employee's perception of the actual events is reasonably grounded in fact or reality. A hernia to be compensable must be clearly recent in origin and result from a strain arising out of and in the course of the employment and be promptly reported to the employer.

(c) Except as provided in section 302, "wage earning capacity" means the wages the employee earns or is capable of earning at a job reasonably available to that employee, whether or not actually earned. For the purposes of establishing wage earning capacity, an employee has an affirmative duty to seek work reasonably available to that employee, taking into consideration the limitations from the work-related personal injury or disease. A magistrate may consider good-faith job search efforts to determine whether jobs are reasonably available.

(d) "Wage loss" means the amount of wages lost due to a disability. The employee shall establish a connection between the disability and reduced wages in establishing the wage loss. Wage loss may be established, among other methods, by demonstrating the employee's good-faith effort to procure work within his or her wage earning capacity. A partially disabled employee who establishes a good-faith effort to procure work but cannot obtain work within his or her wage earning capacity is entitled to weekly benefits under subsection (5) as if totally disabled.

(3) To establish an initial showing of disability, an employee shall do all of the following:

(a) Disclose his or her qualifications and training, including education, skills, and experience, whether or not they are relevant to the job the employee was performing at the time of the injury.

(b) Provide evidence as to the jobs, if any, he or she is qualified and trained to perform within the same salary range as his or her maximum wage earning capacity at the time of the injury.

(c) Demonstrate that the work-related injury prevents the employee from performing jobs identified as within his or her qualifications and training that pay maximum wages.

(d) If the employee is capable of performing any of the jobs identified in subdivision (c), show that he or she cannot obtain any of those jobs. The evidence shall include a showing of a good-faith attempt to procure postinjury employment if there are jobs at the employee's maximum wage earning capacity at the time of the injury.

(4) Once an employee establishes an initial showing of a disability under subsection (3), the employer bears the burden of production of evidence to refute the employee's showing. In satisfying its burden of production of evidence, the employer has a right to discovery if necessary for the employer to sustain its burden and present a meaningful defense. The employee may present additional evidence to challenge the evidence submitted by the employer.

(5) If a personal injury arising out of the course of employment causes total disability and wage loss and

the employee is entitled to wage loss benefits, the employer shall pay or cause to be paid to the injured employee as provided in this section weekly compensation equal to 80% of the employee's after-tax average weekly wage, but not more than the maximum weekly rate determined under section 355. Compensation shall be paid for the duration of the disability.

(6) If a personal injury arising out of the course of employment causes partial disability and wage loss and the employee is entitled to wage loss benefits, the employer shall pay or cause to be paid to the injured employee as provided in this section weekly compensation equal to 80% of the difference between the injured employee's after-tax average weekly wage before the personal injury and the employee's wage earning capacity after the personal injury, but not more than the maximum weekly rate determined under section 355. Compensation shall be paid for the duration of the disability.

(7) If disability and wage loss are established, entitlement to weekly wage loss benefits shall be determined as applicable pursuant to this section and as follows:

(a) If an employee receives a bona fide offer of reasonable employment from the previous employer, another employer, or through the Michigan unemployment insurance agency and the employee refuses that employment without good and reasonable cause, the employee shall be considered to have voluntarily removed himself or herself from the work force and is no longer entitled to any wage loss benefits under this act during the period of refusal.

(b) If an employee is terminated from reasonable employment for fault of the employee, the employee is considered to have voluntarily removed himself or herself from the work force and is not entitled to any wage loss benefits under this act.

(c) If an employee is employed and the average weekly wage of the employee is less than that which the employee received before the date of injury, the employee shall receive weekly benefits under this act equal to 80% of the difference between the injured employee's after-tax weekly wage before the date of injury and the after-tax weekly wage that the injured employee earns after the date of injury, but not more than the maximum weekly rate of compensation, as determined under section 355.

(d) If an employee is employed and the average weekly wage of the employee is equal to or more than the average weekly wage the employee received before the date of injury, the employee is not entitled to any wage loss benefits under this act for the duration of that employment.

(e) If the employee, after having been employed pursuant to this subsection, loses his or her job through no fault of the employee and the employee is still disabled, the employee shall receive compensation under this act as follows:

(i) If the employee was employed for less than 100 weeks, the employee shall receive compensation based upon his or her wage at the time of the original injury.

(ii) If the employee was employed for 100 weeks or more but less than 250 weeks, then after the employee exhausts unemployment benefit eligibility, a worker's compensation magistrate may determine that the employment since the time of the injury has not established a new wage earning capacity and, if the magistrate makes that determination, benefits shall be based on the employee's wage at the original date of injury. If the magistrate does not make that determination, the employee is presumed to have established a post-injury wage earning capacity and benefits shall not be paid based on the wage at the original date of injury.

(iii) If the employee was employed for 250 weeks or more, the employee is presumed to have established a post-injury wage earning capacity.

(8) The Michigan unemployment insurance agency shall notify the agency in writing of the name of any employee who refuses any bona fide offer of reasonable employment. Upon notification to the agency, the agency shall notify the carrier who shall terminate the benefits of the employee pursuant to subsection (7)(a).

(9) As used in this section, "reasonable employment" means work that is within the employee's capacity to perform that poses no clear and proximate threat to that employee's health and safety, and that is within a reasonable distance from that employee's residence. The employee's capacity to perform shall not be limited to work suitable to his or her qualifications and training.

(10) This section shall apply to personal injuries or work related diseases occurring on or after June 30, 1985.

History: Add. 1985, Act 103, Imd. Eff. July 30, 1985;—Am. 1986, Act 314, Imd. Eff. Dec. 23, 1986;—Am. 1987, Act 28, Imd. Eff. May 14, 1987;—Am. 2011, Act 266, Imd. Eff. Dec. 19, 2011.

Compiler's note: For legislative intent as to severability, see Compiler's note to MCL 418.213.

Former MCL 418.401, which pertained to definitions, was repealed by Act 103 of 1985, Imd. Eff. July 30, 1985.

Enacting section 2 of Act 266 of 2011 provides:

"Enacting section 2. This amendatory act applies to injuries incurred on or after its effective date."

Popular name: Act 317