

FINAL BILL REPORT

HB 2014

C 112 L 04

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Preventing denial of insurance coverage for injuries caused by narcotic or alcohol use.

Sponsors: By Representatives Flannigan, Delvin, Kirby, Moeller, Lovick, Lantz, G. Simpson, Shabro, Edwards and Kagi.

House Committee on Financial Institutions & Insurance
Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care

Background:

Disability Insurance

The Insurance Commissioner is responsible for licensing and regulating insurance companies, including health carriers, in Washington. Health carriers include disability insurers, health care service contractors, or health maintenance organizations. Disability insurers may offer health coverage to individuals or groups, which is typically a "fee for service" type of health coverage.

Treatment for Traumatic Injuries

Individuals involved in traumatic accidents are transported to hospital emergency rooms where they are admitted and screened to determine a course of treatment for their injuries. Payment for care may be coordinated with the responsible insurer or health carrier.

During the initial screening, emergency room personnel may determine if a patient is under the influence of narcotics or alcohol and may provide treatment. According to a 2000 study by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, between 25 and 40 percent of trauma patients also experience chronic alcoholism. In addition, the study provides the following:

- Alcoholism results in repeated episodes of trauma, drunk driving, and alcohol related crashes.
- Trauma patients with alcohol problems are more than twice as likely to be readmitted with injuries in the two years following their initial injury than patients without alcoholism.
- Brief interventions are effective in decreasing problem drinking and lowering subsequent health care use.

A disability insurer is permitted by law to deny payment for the treatment of injuries resulting from alcohol or narcotics use, unless the alcohol or narcotics were administered under the

advice of a physician. There are no statutory provisions with respect to other types of health insurance.

Summary:

All health carriers are explicitly prohibited from denying coverage for the treatment of an injury solely because the injury resulted from the use of alcohol or narcotics.

The law allowing individual disability insurers to deny payment for the treatment of injuries resulting from the use of alcohol or narcotics is repealed.

These provisions apply to all contracts issued or renewed on or after the Act's effective date.

Votes on Final Passage:

House 74 21

Senate 48 0

Effective: June 10, 2004