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California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

Employees and Inmates Generally Received Necessary Medical Care for Work-Related Injuries Within Reasonable Time Frames

Background

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) employs thousands of individuals to oversee the nearly 130,000 inmates it housed as of June 2018. In addition, CDCR employed 60,000 of those inmates in jobs, such as working in the kitchen or carpentry shop or performing yard work on facility grounds. Further, the California Prison Industry Authority (CalPIA)—a state entity that operates manufacturing and agricultural industries with the intent to provide inmates with work skills—employed an additional 5,000 inmates.

Because employees can sustain injuries on the job, CDCR must—like any employer—provide employees with certain workers’ compensation benefits, such as disability pay and medical care to cure or relieve injuries. The State Compensation Insurance Fund (SCIF) administers the workers’ compensation claims process for many state agencies—SCIF processes claims for work-related injuries submitted to it, determines liability for those claims, and helps ensure that the medical procedures requested are appropriate to treat workers’ injuries, among other functions. If injured while performing work-related duties, inmates on job assignments are generally eligible to receive workers’ compensation benefits.

Audit Results

- SCIF completed most liability decisions to establish whether the injury is work-related (and thus the employer is financially responsible for the treatment) within the time frames set by laws and regulations—the few delayed or late liability decisions it made did not hinder injured workers’ access to medical care.
- Despite different processes and time requirements, many of the injured workers—employees and inmates—received immediate medical care following a work-related injury.
 - » Although Correctional Health—which provides health treatment for inmates—and SCIF both facilitate medical care for injured workers, each organization has distinct priorities unique to the populations they serve.
 - » Medical providers treated workers promptly and SCIF and Correctional Health authorized requested treatments within required time frames.
- CDCR employees generally recovered more slowly than inmates and also returned to work more slowly—however recovery time can vary greatly because of the many ways that injuries and individuals differ from one another. Furthermore, differences in work restrictions cause some employees to return to work more slowly than inmates.

Although Cleared for Modified Duty, Many Employees Whose Claims We Reviewed Spent Most of This Time Not Working Because Facilities Could Not Accommodate Work Restrictions

