



June 19, 2020

Dr. Steven Markowitz
Chair
Advisory Board on Toxic Substances and
Worker Health
Queens College, Remsen Hall
65-30 Kissena Boulevard
Flushing, NY 11367

Dear Dr. Markowitz:

I am writing in response to recommendations made at the April 15-16, 2020, meeting of the Advisory Board on Toxic Substances and Worker Health (Advisory Board or Board).

In conjunction with that meeting, the Board recommended the following:

1) Adding a general open-ended question for the end of the [Occupational Health Questionnaire (OHQ)], such as:

“Did we miss anything? For example, are you concerned about any exposures to toxic substances that were not adequately described in your responses in this questionnaire? Please describe your concern: for example, what types of substances these were (even if you don’t know the technical name), when the exposures happened, what kind of [Personal Protective Equipment] you used at the time and whether you think these exposures are related to the health problem for which you are applying for compensation.”

2) Sending claimants, prior to the OHQ interview, either a copy of the OHQ or a simplified version of the OHQ or worksheet, together with brief examples of common work tasks and processes, which the claimant could use to gather their occupational information.

DEEOIC agrees with the first recommendation about adding an open-ended question to the OHQ and it will include this update in the pilot beginning within the next couple of months.

The Board also recommended sending claimants, prior to the OHQ interview, either a copy of the OHQ or a simplified version of the OHQ or worksheet, together with brief examples of common work tasks and processes, which claimants could use to gather their occupational information. As justification for this additional recommendation, the Board indicated that, based on the advanced age of some claimants, it might be useful for them to be able to organize their thoughts prior to the interview.

When scheduling interviews, DEEOIC does provide guidance to claimants about the OHQ interview process. At the completion of each interview, DEEOIC Resource Center staff advise claimants of their ability to submit additional information to assist in adjudicating the claim. Resource Center staff also mail the claimants the completed OHQ for their review, and ask the claimant to provide

input on needed corrections. DEEOIC, with recent input from the Board, anticipates that the redesigned OHQ will improve the quality of data collected during the interview. DEEOIC agrees with the Board that providing claimants with better information about the OHQ process may also improve exposure data. Accordingly, DEEOIC will work to produce a notice or summary document to help claimants prepare for an OHQ. This process will be included in standard operating procedures for the Resource Centers this summer.

On behalf of the Department, the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs, the Energy program, and the communities we service, I look forward to the continued efforts of the Advisory Board.

Sincerely,

/s/

Julia K. Hearthway
Director, Office of Workers' Compensation Programs