

Health

FILING DEADLINE EXTENDED

The filing deadline for a certain class of claimants who are eligible for compensation through the recently reauthorized National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, has been extended to Jan. 31, 1991, according to HHS Secretary Louis W. Sullivan, M.D.

Congress granted the extension because it felt that the previously established filing deadline of Oct. 1, left some would-be petitioners with insufficient time to file a petition.

The program is intended to serve as a faster and less expensive procedure than a civil suit for resolving claims for certain vaccine-related injuries. Using this no-fault system, petitioners do not need to prove that those who manufactured or administered the vaccine were at fault. They must prove that the vaccine is related to their injury.

The federal program provides compensation to individuals who

suffered injuries associated with one of the following vaccines:

-Diphtheria and tetanus toxoids and pertussis vaccine (DTP),

-Measles, mumps and rubella vaccine,

-Oral polio vaccine,

-Inactivated polio vaccine.

The public law that authorized the extension now requires that for injuries based on vaccines administered before Oct. 1, 1988, claimants must now file by Jan. 31, 1991, to use this program. Although claimants may not use the program if they miss this deadline, they still may be able to pursue their claims in civil court.

For injuries occurring on or after Oct. 1, 1988, claimants must file within certain time periods prescribed by the National Childhood Injury Act of 1986 as amended.

A claim can be made by any person with a vaccine-related

injury or by that person's parent, guardian or trustees. Claimants must file a petition with the U.S. Claims Court, 717 Madison Place N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005. The petition must contain complete medical records and sworn statements to support the claim of a vaccine-related injury.

A Claims Court special mas-

ter or judge will decide whether a claim should be paid. If the claimant elects to accept the Claims Court Award, payment will be made by the Health Resources and Services Administration, a U.S. Public Health Service agency.

The maximum death benefit is set by law at \$250,000. For injury cases, the amount of

payment is determined by the court based on the needs of the individual and the extent of injury. An injury award may include payment for pain, suffering, emotional distress and medical, residential, custodial and rehabilitation expenses that cannot be reimbursed from other sources. Attorney's fees and court costs may be paid by the

program.

Persons seeking information on how to file a petition should contact the U.S. Claims Court at the address listed above. For general information the Health Resources and Services Administration will continue to operate a toll-free hotline. The number is 1-800-338-2382.

CHRONIC ILLS, DEATH RATE - SHOW BLACK-WHITE HEALTH GAP

WASHINGTON, D.C. - A racial "Health Gap" exists between "White America" and "Black America" according to documented evidence of shorter life expectancy, a greater number of chronic conditions and a higher mortality rate for older Blacks than elderly Whites, an aging expert told a historic joint special senate committee-Congressional Black Caucus session recently during the 20th Annual CBC Legislative Weekend.

Gorham L. Black Jr., co-chairman of the National Caucus and Center of Black Aged, Inc., and national secretary of

the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) presented the testimony before the sessions convened by Sen. David Pryor (D-AR), Chair, Senate Special Committee on Aging and Rep. Louis Stokes (D-OH), Chair, Congressional Black Caucus Health Braintrust.

Black also presented NCBA's annual report "The Health Status of Aged Blacks", an NCBA statement on "Eliminating Discriminatory Practices in Nursing Homes" and a statement on "Controlling Prescription Drug Prices Under Medicaid" by Dr. Aaron E. Henry, NCBA Co-Chairman, Mississippi State

Senator, State NAACP President, and Past President, National Pharmaceutical Association.

Other panelists included Dr. Charles Johnson, president, National Medical Association; Dr. Hazel Harper, president,

Robert T. Freeman Dental society, representing the National Dental Association; C. Alicia Georges, president, National Black Nurses' Association, and Dr. Wendell Hill, current NPA president.



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