

4123.88 Solicitation and Misrepresentation of Authority; Claim File Public Records.

(A) No person shall orally or in writing, directly or indirectly, or through any agent or other person fraudulently hold the person's self out or represent the person's self or any of the person's partners or associates as authorized by a claimant or employer to take charge of, or represent the claimant or employer in respect of, any claim or matter in connection therewith before the bureau of workers' compensation or the industrial commission or its district or staff hearing officers. No person shall directly or indirectly solicit authority, or pay or give anything of value to another person to solicit authority, or accept or receive pay or anything of value from another person for soliciting authority, from a claimant or employer to take charge of, or represent the claimant or employer in respect of, any claim or appeal which is or may be filed with the bureau or commission. No person shall, without prior authority from the bureau, a member of the commission, the claimant, or the employer, examine or directly or indirectly cause or employ another person to examine any claim file or any other file pertaining thereto. No person shall forge an authorization for the purpose of examining or cause another person to examine any such file. No district or staff hearing officer or other employee of the bureau or commission, notwithstanding the provisions of section 4123.27 of the Revised Code, shall divulge any information in respect of any claim or appeal which is or may be filed with a district or staff hearing officer, the bureau, or commission to any person other than members of the commission or to the superior of the employee except upon authorization of the administrator of workers' compensation or a member of the commission or upon authorization of the claimant or employer.

(B) The records described or referred to in division (A) of this section are not public records as defined in division (A)(1) of section 149.43 of the Revised Code. Any information directly or indirectly identifying the address or telephone number of a claimant, regardless of whether the claimant's claim is active or closed, is not a public record. No person shall solicit or obtain any such information from any such employee without first having obtained an authorization therefore as provided in this section.

(C) Except as otherwise specified in division (D) of this section, information kept by the commission or the bureau pursuant to this section is for the exclusive use and information of the commission and the bureau in the discharge of their official duties, and shall not be open to the public nor be used in any court in any action or proceeding pending therein, unless the commission or the bureau is a party to the action or proceeding. The information, however, may be tabulated and published by the commission or the bureau in statistical form for the use and information of other state agencies and the public.

(D)

(1) Upon receiving a written request made and signed by a journalist, the commission or the bureau shall disclose to the journalist the address or addresses and telephone number or numbers of claimants, regardless of whether their claims are active or closed, and the dependents of those claimants.

(2) A journalist is permitted to request the information described in division (D)(1) of this section for multiple workers or dependents in one written request.

(3) A journalist shall include all of the following in the written request:

(a) The journalist's name, title, and signature;

(b) The name and title of the journalist's employer;

(c) A statement that the disclosure of the information sought is in the public interest.

(4) Neither the commission nor the bureau may inquire as to the specific public interest served by the disclosure of information requested by a journalist under division (D) of this section.

(E) As used in this section, "journalist" has the same meaning as in division (B)(5) of section 149.43 of the Revised Code.

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