

TENNESSEE WORKERS’ COMPENSATION APPEALS BOARD

Slater v. ADECCO USA, Inc.

2026 TN WC App. 18 · No. 2020-01-0512 · Decided March 24, 2026

SUMMARY

The Tennessee Workers’ Compensation Appeals Board affirmed the denial of an employee’s request for nurse case management services, attorneys’ fees, costs, and penalties. The Board held that nurse case management is generally an employer-discretionary administrative function, rather than medical treatment that an attending physician may order, except in catastrophic-injury cases. It also upheld the trial court’s finding that the employer did not unreasonably cause the delay in scheduling the medical procedure and remanded the case.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Tennessee Workers’ Compensation Appeals Board
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Pele I. Godkin; Timothy W. Conner; Meredith B. Weaver
JURISDICTION	Tennessee Workers’ Compensation Appeals Board
DECIDED	March 24, 2026
DOCKET	2020-01-0512
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Second interlocutory appeal from an expedited hearing order denying the employee's request for nurse case management services, attorneys’ fees, costs, and penalties, while ordering the employer to authorize and schedule a spinal ablation procedure that had already been performed.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The trial court's factual findings are presumed correct unless the preponderance of the evidence is otherwise. Credibility determinations based on live testimony receive considerable deference, while appellate courts may independently assess the weight and credibility of deposition testimony. Statutory and regulatory interpretation are reviewed de novo without a presumption of correctness.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published opinion
PARTIES	Ronnie Slater v. ADECCO USA, Inc., et al.

TOPICS

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standard of review

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PRACTICE AREAS

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QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether an employer must provide nurse case management services when requested by an employee or recommended by an authorized physician in a non-catastrophic workers' compensation case.
2. Whether the trial court erred in denying attorneys' fees, costs, and a referral for penalties based on the alleged unreasonable delay in providing the recommended medical procedure.

HOLDINGS

1. Nurse case management is an administrative function distinct from medical treatment, and its use is generally within the employer's discretion unless the injury is catastrophic. An employee or treating physician cannot require the employer to provide nurse case management merely by requesting or recommending it.
2. The employee failed to establish that the employer unreasonably delayed providing benefits or was the sole cause of the delay; therefore, the trial court properly denied attorneys' fees, costs, and a referral for penalties.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"In short, we conclude the use of nurse case management services is at an employer's discretion unless it is a catastrophic injury." (5)

"Thus, we agree with Employer that nurse case management is an administrative function distinct from the provision of "medical and surgical treatment, medicine, . . . [and] such nursing services or psychological services . . . made reasonably necessary by accident," as mandated by section 204(a)(1)(A)." (5)

"The trial court's factual findings are presumed correct, see Tennessee Code Annotated section 50-6-239(c) (7), and Employee has not shown by a preponderance of the evidence that the trial court erred in declining to award attorneys' fees and costs or to provide a referral for penalties." (6)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Ronnie Slater suffered a work-related back injury while employed by ADECCO USA, Inc., underwent lumbar surgery, and later received treatment for continuing symptoms. An authorized physician recommended a spinal ablation and suggested that a nurse case manager accompany Slater to medical visits. The ablation was performed in October 2025, before the trial court entered its December 31, 2025 order directing the employer to authorize and schedule it. Slater sought nurse case management, attorneys' fees, costs, and penalties based on the alleged delay in providing treatment.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Slater sustained a compensable workplace back injury and later sought additional medical treatment and related relief. In a prior appeal, the Appeals Board affirmed the trial court's denial of additional left-knee treatment and remanded. In this proceeding, the trial court decided the employee's request on the written record, ordered the employer to take reasonable steps to authorize and schedule a spinal ablation, denied nurse case management and fee-related relief, and the employee appealed. After learning that the ablation had already been performed, the Appeals Board affirmed and remanded.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

The case was remanded after affirmance; the opinion provides no more specific remand instruction.

CASES CITED

- Slater v. ADECCO USA, Inc., No. 2020-01-0512, 2025 TN Wrk. Comp. App. Bd. LEXIS 35, at *2-10 (Tenn. Workers' Comp. App. Bd. Aug. 20, 2025)
- Madden v. Holland Grp. of Tenn., Inc., 277 S.W.3d 896, 898 (Tenn. 2009)
- Edwards v. Peoplease, LLC, No. W2024-01034-SC-R3-WC, 2025 Tenn. LEXIS 514, at *18 (Tenn. Dec. 22, 2025)
- Mansell v. Bridgestone Firestone N. Am. Tire, LLC, 417 S.W.3d 393, 399 (Tenn. 2013)

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