

In the United States Court of Federal Claims

OFFICE OF SPECIAL MASTERS

No. 17-0454V

Filed: July 13, 2018

UNPUBLISHED

DUSTIN MOBLEY,

Petitioner,

v.

SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES,

Respondent.

Special Processing Unit (SPU);
Attorneys' Fees and Costs

*Amber Diane Wilson, Maglio Christopher & Toale, PA, Washington, DC, for petitioner.
Sarah Christina Duncan, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, DC, for respondent.*

DECISION ON ATTORNEYS' FEES AND COSTS¹

Dorsey, Chief Special Master:

On March 29, 2017, petitioner filed a petition for compensation under the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, 42 U.S.C. §300aa-10, *et seq.*,² (the "Vaccine Act"). Petitioner alleges that he suffered a left shoulder injury caused by his November 11, 2015 influenza ("flu") vaccination. Petition at 1. On February 15, 2018, the undersigned issued a decision awarding compensation to petitioner based on the respondent's proffer. (ECF No. 34).

On June 26, 2018, petitioner filed a motion for attorneys' fees and costs. (ECF No. 40). Petitioner requests attorneys' fees in the amount of \$18,274.50 and attorneys' costs in the amount of \$749.18. *Id.* at 1-2. In compliance with General Order #9,

¹ Because this unpublished decision contains a reasoned explanation for the action in this case, the undersigned intends to post it on the United States Court of Federal Claims' website, in accordance with the E-Government Act of 2002. 44 U.S.C. § 3501 note (2012) (Federal Management and Promotion of Electronic Government Services). In accordance with Vaccine Rule 18(b), petitioner has 14 days to identify and move to redact medical or other information, the disclosure of which would constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy. If, upon review, the undersigned agrees that the identified material fits within this definition, the undersigned will redact such material from public access.

² National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act of 1986, Pub. L. No. 99-660, 100 Stat. 3755. Hereinafter, for ease of citation, all "§" references to the Vaccine Act will be to the pertinent subparagraph of 42 U.S.C. § 300aa (2012).

petitioner filed a signed statement indicating that petitioner incurred no out-of-pocket expenses. *Id.* at 2. Thus, the total amount requested is \$19,023.68.

Respondent has filed no response.

The undersigned has reviewed the billing records submitted with petitioner's request and finds a reduction in the amount of fees to be awarded appropriate for the reason listed below.

Upon review of the records, a number of entries billed by paralegals are for tasks better characterized as clerical or administrative. It is clearly established that secretarial work "should be considered as normal overhead office costs included within the attorneys' fee rates." *Rochester v. U.S.*, 18 Cl. Ct. 379, 387 (1989); *Dingle v. Sec'y of Health & Human Servs.*, No. 08-579V, 2014 WL 630473, at *4 (Fed. Cl. Spec. Mstr. Jan. 24, 2014). "[B]illing for clerical and other secretarial work is not permitted in the Vaccine Program." *Mostovoy*, 2016 WL 720969, at *5 (citing *Rochester*, 18 Cl. Ct. at 387). A total of 2.4 hours³ was billed by paralegals on administrative tasks including, opening files, organizing documents, and mailing correspondence. For these reasons the request for attorney's fees is **reduced in the amount of \$298.50**.⁴

The Vaccine Act permits an award of reasonable attorneys' fees and costs. § 15(e). Based on the reasonableness of petitioner's request, the undersigned **GRANTS** petitioner's motion for attorneys' fees and costs.

Accordingly, the undersigned awards the total of \$18,725.18⁵ as a lump sum in the form of a check jointly payable to petitioner and petitioner's counsel Amber Diane Wilson. Petitioner requests check be forwarded to Maglio Christopher & Toale, PA, 1605 Main Street, Suite 710, Sarasota, Florida, 34236.

³ Examples of these entries include: January 29, 2016 (1.0 hrs) "Open file and set up same"; March 29, 2017 (0.20 hrs) "Prepare Petition and Civil Cover Sheet to be sent to HHS re certified mail"; and May 18, 2018 (0.30 hrs) "Coordinate delivery options for entitlement check package to client". These entries are merely examples and are not exhaustive.

⁴ This amount consists of: 1.2 hours at \$105 per hour; 0.3 hours at \$135 per hour; 0.40 hours at \$145 per hour and 0.5 hours at \$148 per hour.

⁵ This amount is intended to cover all legal expenses incurred in this matter. This award encompasses all charges by the attorney against a client, "advanced costs" as well as fees for legal services rendered. Furthermore, § 15(e)(3) prevents an attorney from charging or collecting fees (including costs) that would be in addition to the amount awarded herein. See generally *Beck v. Sec'y of Health & Human Servs.*, 924 F.2d 1029 (Fed. Cir.1991).

The clerk of the court shall enter judgment in accordance herewith.⁶

IT IS SO ORDERED.

s/Nora Beth Dorsey

Nora Beth Dorsey
Chief Special Master

⁶ Pursuant to Vaccine Rule 11(a), entry of judgment can be expedited by the parties' joint filing of notice renouncing the right to seek review.