WHAT IS TORT LAW?

A “tort” is a civil wrong for which the law provides a remedy. By definition, a tort is when a person or entity’s intentional or unintentional action causes injury or damage to a person, or to an individual’s property or reputation. Examples in the healthcare industry include lawsuits for negligence or medical malpractice. Under tort law, the victim files suit in civil court against the offender. This generally falls under a state’s jurisdiction.

WHAT IS THE NEED FOR TORT REFORM?

Tort law is complex. In recent years, Utah has undertaken some reform of the tort system to create a level playing field. For example, the Utah legislature found that the number of lawsuits for damages and the amount of judgments and settlements arising from healthcare had been increasing significantly. Because of these increases, the insurance industry substantially increased the cost of medical malpractice insurance. That, in turn, led to increased healthcare costs. The legislature also found that certain healthcare providers were discouraged from continuing to provide services because of the high cost and possible unavailability of malpractice insurance.

HOW DOES TORT REFORM IMPACT INTERMOUNTAIN HEALTHCARE?

Reforms made to Utah’s tort laws are important to Intermountain Healthcare. The laws ensure that claims are brought within a reasonable period of time and limit that time to a period for which professional liability insurance premiums can be reasonably and accurately calculated. Other revisions help expedite the early evaluation and settlement of claims.

WHAT IS THE STATUS OF TORT LAW IN UTAH?

Utah has no anticipated tort reform changes in the near future.

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