

A Provider's Basic Understanding of BWC's Vocational Rehabilitation Program

Vocational Rehabilitation Mission statement

To provide an individualized, face-to-face, return-to-work (RTW) program to assist injured employees who without specialized vocational rehabilitation services beyond standard medical treatment would be unlikely to return to work or stay at work in a timely, safe, and productive manner

When to refer

Injured workers must be at a point medically where they can participate (aka feasible).

- Be eligible by rule (receiving total temporary, or have a maximum medical improvement (MMI) or % permanent partial designation along with restrictions)
- Be willing and available to begin some type of service to move them closer to RTW – they do not have to be MMI

Considerations

- Anyone can refer an injured worker to rehabilitation. This includes the physician, employer, attorney, managed care organization (MCO), BWC or the injured worker.
- Vocational rehabilitation is voluntary for the injured worker (required for the employer).
- The injured worker has choice of provider (physician, voc case manager, etc.).
- BWC provides the parties to the claim with due process (appeal) rights on all decisions that affect workers' compensation benefits.

MCO's role in vocational rehabilitation

- Identify claims that could benefit from vocational rehab tools to assist in RTW and make a referral
- Assess the initial feasibility or readiness for focused vocational rehab services and assigns a vocational rehab case manager
- Authorize payment for services agreed to in a comprehensive RTW plan in accordance with the BWC laws, rules and policies

BWC's role in vocational rehabilitation

- Determine an individual injured worker's eligibility for services, oversee appropriateness of plan services and authorize compensation living maintenance
- Develop the rules, policies and program evaluation and provide case facilitation to ensure quality
- Audit for compliance by MCOs and providers

How the process works

- The MCO assigns a certified vocational rehab case manager.
- Case manager meets with the injured worker, physician and employer to identify RTW barriers and lay out the RTW plan.
- The case manager often develops an assessment plan to clarify appropriate case direction. This could include services

such as vocational evaluation, functional capacity evaluation (FCE) and situational work assessment, etc.

- Finally, the injured worker, the case manager, MCO and BWC agree to a comprehensive plan.
- Hierarchy of RTW equals same job, same employer; different job, same employer; same job, different employer; different job, different employer; skill enhancement, short-term training may help at any step in return to work.
- The injured worker may receive living maintenance wage loss compensation to help buffer the financial impact of a new lower salaried job. To obtain this benefit the physician completes a Physician's Report of Work Ability (MEDCO-14) to show an injured worker's restrictions.

Vocational rehab services

Usually provided at an employer's work site

- Ergonomic study/implementation
- Job Analysis
- Job modifications/tools and equipment
- Transitional work and on-site physical therapy
- Gradual RTW plans
- Employer incentive contracts
- Work trials

Physically restorative

- Occupational rehab – comprehensive (work hardening)
- Work conditioning (requires simulated work tasks be incorporated)
- Active physical therapy

Other

- Vocational case management time/travel/mileage
- Vocational evaluation and testing
- Career counseling
- Situational work assessment
- Work adjustment
- Training – remedial, short term or long term
- Job seeking skills training
- Job placement and development/job club
- Auto repair and child/dependent care as needed

Our Remain at Work program may provide many of these services for injured workers who have medical-only claims and who have not reached the lost-time designation of eight or more days missed from work. See <https://www.bwc.ohio.gov/downloads/brochureware/factsheets/FSRAW.pdf>. For a copy of all vocational rehabilitation services, definitions and fee schedule, click <https://www.bwc.ohio.gov/downloads/blankpdf/VocRehabFeeSchedule2014.pdf>.

For more information, contact the BWC rehabilitation policy unit at Policy.R.1@bwc.state.oh.us.