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

Injured worker participation
- The injured worker must be at a point medically where he/she can participate in vocational rehabilitation services, also known as feasible.
- The injured worker must meet the eligibility criteria established in rule [Link to OAC4123-18-03].
- The injured worker must be willing and available to begin vocational rehabilitation services, which moves him/her closer to RTW.
- The injured worker does not need to reach maximum medical improvement for his/her physician to release him/her to participate in vocational rehabilitation services.

Considerations
- Anyone can refer an injured worker for vocational rehabilitation.
- Vocational rehabilitation is a voluntary program for the injured worker and a required program for the employer.
- The injured worker has freedom of choice to select his/her vocational rehabilitation provider(s).
- Parties to the claim retain all due process (appeal) rights on all decisions that affect workers’ compensation benefits.

Physician’s role in vocational rehabilitation
- The case manager will contact the physician and obtain any documentation of:
  - The injured worker’s current physical restrictions related to the allowed conditions;
  - Current medications;
  - Any needed prescription for plan services.
- The case manager will discuss with the physician:
  - The injured worker’s medication usage and specifically how this may impact the injured worker’s ability to perform specific work tasks (e.g., operate machinery, drive);
  - The injured worker’s restrictions as they relate to the injured worker’s targeted job goal, using the job description or job analysis;
  - The RTW options available through the employer, including transitional work or other early RTW services; and
  - The injured worker’s’ ability to participate in vocational rehabilitation services.

How the process works
- The managed care organization (MCO) will determine initial feasibility and if the injured worker is willing and able to participate.
- BWC will determine if the injured worker meets the eligibility criteria to participate.
- The MCO will assign a certified vocational rehabilitation case manager.
- Case manager meets with the injured worker, physician and employer to identify RTW barriers and lay out the RTW plan.

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The case manager often develops an assessment plan to clarify appropriate case direction. This could include services such as vocational evaluation, functional capacity evaluation and situational work assessment, etc.

The injured worker, the case manager, MCO and BWC agree to a comprehensive RTW plan.

The MCO authorizes payment for services agreed to in a comprehensive RTW plan in accordance with BWC’s laws, rules and policies.

BWC will determine an injured worker’s eligibility for services, oversee appropriateness of plan services and authorize living maintenance compensation.

The injured worker may receive living maintenance wage loss compensation after a successful RTW to help buffer the financial impact of a new lower salaried job. In order to obtain this benefit, the physician completes a Physician’s Report of Work Ability (MEDCO-14) to show an injured worker’s restrictions.

**Hierarchy of RTW**
- Same job, same employer
- Different job, same employer
- Same job, different employer
- Different job, different employer

**Vocational rehabilitation 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 services**
- Occupational rehabilitation – comprehensive (work hardening)
- Work conditioning (requires simulated work tasks be incorporated)
- Active physical therapy

**Other services**
- Vocational case management
- 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

A Remain at Work program provides many of these services for injured workers who have not missed eight or more days from work. For more information about this program, reference BWCs Remain at work – a healthy approach to staying productive brochure by visiting our website or by clicking on the following link.

You can find a copy of all vocational rehabilitation services, definitions and the fee schedule by visiting our website or clicking on the following link.

If you have questions, email the BWC rehabilitation policy unit at Policy.R.1@bwc.state.oh.us.