

BWC's Vocational Rehabilitation Program – Physician Quick Reference Guide



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.

- 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.