



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIES
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March 25, 2004

To: Private Sector Rehabilitation Providers
From: Sandy Dziedzic, Program Manager for Claims Administration
Subject: Early Return-to-Work Initiative

L&I has made important operational changes to increase the likelihood of return to work for more injured workers. The purpose of this memorandum is to give an overview of those changes, and to clarify expectations for private sector vocational providers.

Overview

Beginning March 29, 2004, most State Fund claims that have had 14 days of time loss compensation will be reviewed by L&I and subsequently assigned to L&I staff in field offices for early return to work activities. These activities will focus exclusively on returning the worker to his or her employer at the earliest possible opportunity. If no return to work opportunities exist, or if other issues preclude immediate return to work, the field staff will send the assignment back to the claim manager, or make a vocational referral to the private sector.

Expected Results

- More timely provision of return to work services will result in more workers returning to work sooner.
- Those workers who do need further vocational assessment and/or services will be referred sooner.

What this means for Vocational Providers

- Most EI and AWA referrals will be made earlier in the claim than in the past.
- EI and AWA referrals to the private sector will be made by both claim staff *and field staff* and monitored by claims staff.
- L&I's policy preventing the marketing of claim managers for referrals also applies to L&I field staff that make vocational referrals (Policy 6.11).

- Medical instability issues. In general, a vocational provider should not close a referral due to medical instability unless this status is expected to last for at least the next 90 consecutive days.
- The department expects that vocational providers will address in their reports all issues required by WAC prior to closing a referral as medically unstable. In the case of AWA referrals, this may include, but is not limited to, complete work and educational history, and an analysis, including supporting documentation (i.e., Jas, LMS) of occupational possibilities that may be reasonable when the worker is medically stable.
- Vocational providers should carefully review the referral text for important information on work that has already been done on the claim (i.e., “no options with EOR”) so as to avoid redundant services.

Additional Information

The department has developed Answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for vocational providers. The FAQs are available at L&I's vocational web site:

<http://www.lni.wa.gov/ClaimsInsurance/Vocational/WhatsNew/ErtwFAQ.asp>