

Skill Enhancement Training

Vocational Provider Guidance

Note: This job aid is intended for use by Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRCs).

Skill Enhancement Training (SET) is an incentive for workers to stay engaged during their recovery from a workplace injury. **RCW 51.32.095(2)** allows L&I to pay for basic skill development training for eligible workers.

Starting January 1, 2025, SET covers:

- English Language Training (ESL and ELA)
- Adult Basic Education (ABE and I-BEST)
- High school equivalency (HS+ and GED) courses
- Computer equipment, software, and tutoring necessary for effective participation may also be approved.

NOTE: Expansion of coverage for “other basic skills” will be evaluated in 6-9 months.

UNDERSTANDING SET

Eligible workers who qualify for SET can use the incentive to complete basic skills development and training. VRCs should discuss SET with the worker to see if the option is right for them. It is likely that workers won't know about SET without learning about it from the VRC. Before talking to a worker about SET, VRCs should understand what SET covers and how it works.

Available funds

Date range	Maximum fund amount per claim	Maximum SET amount (25%)
July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025	\$20,602.66	\$5,150.66

- All workers benefit from an annual increase
- Using SET funds won't limit access or reduce future vocational retraining funds
- You can review the Claim and Account Center (CAC) to determine if any bills have been paid for SET on the worker's claim
- Bills paid under MISC with Bill Code 1307W must be deducted from the total available amount of the SET fund (per claim)
- If there are no bills found, then the full 25% of the maximum retraining funding is most likely available

Workers

- Only available for workers with a **VR, AWA, or PD referral***
- Workers can use skills gained through SET for their retraining plans
- SET is a voluntary incentive for workers and there is no obligation for the worker to participate
- The incentive may not be appropriate for all workers
- The worker should expect VRCs to discuss progress and barriers.

*Vocational Recovery (VR), Ability to Work Assessment (AWA), Plan Development (PD)

Training and vendor expectations

- Courses must be offered by a training provider with an L&I provider number
- Equipment vendors must have an L&I provider number
- L&I only approves tutoring when it's connected to a course
- SET may cover the costs of requested courses, training, equipment, and/or software
- In the complete [Narrative Report](#), the VRC must verify the requests are essential for the worker's successful participation in training
- All costs must be within the available SET funding
- The training/course schedule will not exceed 90 days or one college-length quarter
- VRCs should ensure providers bill promptly after the start date to avoid funding confusion and billing issues.
- Providers are encouraged to bill for the initial date of service rather than a date range. If a claim closes during SET participation, providers must bill using the initial service date before claim closure.
- For claims ready to close before course completion, coordinate with the provider for timely billing and consult the claim manager as needed to ensure a smooth transition.
- SET courses starting after claim closure are ineligible for payment. If a claim is closing before a course starts, the VRC should work with the provider to withdraw the worker.

What SET does not cover

- L&I is not pursuing non-cooperation in SET
- SET does not guarantee that future courses or retraining plans are approved
- SET does not cover travel or accommodation expenses
- Skills the worker gains through SET can't be used in ATW7 transferrable skills outcomes
- Requests for job modifications or pre-job accommodations would be pursued separately for workers who qualify for those benefits.
- SET can't prevent or delay:
 - Valid job offers
 - Medical treatment
 - Vocational recommendations
 - Plan submissions
 - Claim decisions

EXPLORING SET WITH WORKERS

Is SET right for the worker?

VRCs must consider the following factors to decide if SET is an appropriate option for the worker:

- Timing and feasibility of training/coursework
- Worker's medical status or upcoming medical treatment
- Worker's interest in developing basic skills in ESL, ABE, or HS+
- Worker's ability to meet the requirements of the training/coursework
- Status of the worker's claim
- Worker's condition/limitations that could impact SET participation
 - Does the worker have documented medical restrictions?
 - Work with the attending provider if they have concerns about the worker's risk of harm
 - What is the level of physical activity required for the requested training?

Is SET available to the worker?

VRCs should discuss the following with the worker before starting SET:

- Prerequisite skills the worker needs before starting SET training
- Available training options and resources in the worker's geographical region
- Available funds if SET has already been accessed on the claim
- Worker needs a tutor to support their learning

NOTE: *WorkSource* can help VRCs find free training, explore community resources, build soft skills, and/or make recommendations for comparable coursework if something isn't available nearby.

DISCUSSING SET WITH EMPLOYERS

Employers benefit when workers participate in SET. The worker is likely to return to their job with more skills. These skills can better prepare workers for a formal retraining plan. This saves time and money. Workers who are engaged in learning have improved confidence and are motivated by their progress.

How VRCs help

VRCs can incorporate SET as they explore return-to-work options with the worker and engage with the employer. In discussions with the employer, VRCs can confirm:

- Valid job offers can be made, regardless of SET participation or scheduling
- SET helps workers gain needed skills to help them return to work
- SET courses may be approved alongside Stay at Work (WSAW) and/or Preferred Worker benefits
- For State Fund claims, SET costs are covered by WSAW funding and do not affect employer premiums or experience ratings
- For Self-Insured (SI) claims, the employer or their third party administrator pays for SET

SET APPLICATION AND APPROVAL PROCESS

How to apply for SET

The VRC must complete the following steps in order to apply for SET:

1. Review SET criteria with the worker and decide if SET is an option
2. Complete the **SET Application** to L&I with required attachments
 - Confirm the required criteria are met
 - Include the required attachments to the application:
 - Complete **Narrative Report** signed by the VRC and worker
 - Copy of the worker's most recent Activity Prescription Form
 - For SI claims, attach the **Self-Insurance Vocational Reporting Form (SIVRF)**
 - Complete training information with itemized course information, equipment (include delivery costs, if applicable), start and end dates, vendor name, vendor bids, L&I provider number, and total of costs
3. The VRC must fax the SET Application to the claim file

When L&I approves SET

After L&I receives the complete SET Application:

1. The Vocational Services Specialist (VSS) reviews all documents and decides if SET is approved
2. The VSS sends their written decision to the worker, VRC, and other appropriate individuals
3. L&I provides information on the worker's protest and appeal rights

What L&I considers

- L&I approves SET requests if they are made in 90-day increments or one term
- VRCs must submit a new complete application for any additional SET training, courses, or equipment
- A new SET application is required for any coursework regardless of prior approval, which includes when a worker retakes a course
- If a worker decides to pursue training even though the VRC advises against it, the VRC should still submit the application for them.
- If a worker with an SI claim wants this incentive but the SI employer disagrees, the request should be sent to L&I to decide on coverage.

SET DOCUMENTATION

L&I is closely monitoring the use of SET, how it benefits the worker, and the long-term impacts on return-to-work outcomes. VRCs are expected to stay engaged with the worker as they participate in SET, provide updates to L&I on the worker's progress, and address barriers along the way.

To track SET, VRCs must submit the following documentation to L&I:

Progress reports

Provide updates in your existing monthly progress reports on SET exploration, participation, and outcomes. This keeps all claim parties informed and helps L&I assess future SET requests. *Only applies to State Fund claims.*

EVOCs

Submit an [EVOC](#) when SET ends for the worker if the vocational referral is still open. Include a summary of the course, the worker's experience, and the results of the course (pass, fail, N/A). *Only applies to State Fund claims with.*

Closing Reports

List the skills gained through SET. The VRC should make it clear if they did not include any skills from SET in their transferable skills recommendation, if relevant.

NOTE: Avoid language that might suggest non-cooperation.