



Toolbox Topics



Topic 9 - After Injury Rehabilitation

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Topic 9 - After Injury Rehabilitation

DID YOU KNOW?

- One of the main aims of the workers' compensation system is to return injured employees to work as soon as possible.
- "Vocational rehabilitation" is about managing the safe and early return of injured employees to suitable work.
- Approximately \$7000 is available for each claim through an approved vocational rehabilitation provider, to help an injured employee return to work.
- Most injured employees return to their old job, some go to a new job with their old employer, and others go to a new job altogether.
- Injured employees don't have to wait until they are fully fit to get involved in rehabilitation. Waiting too long can lead to boredom, frustration, emotional problems and loss of fitness.

WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS REHABILITATION?

It is the employer's responsibility to:

- provide injured employees, who become totally or partially fit within 12 months, with their original job, if reasonably practicable, or another job they can do.
- ensure injured employees are given every assistance to return to work - even if this is on a part-time basis, alternative duties, or funded by the insurer.

It is the injured employee's responsibility to:

- talk to their doctor and employer about organising their return to work, or if this is not straight-forward
- contact an approved vocational rehabilitation provider
- actively participate in a rehabilitation program and
- co-operate with any negotiated return to work plan.

It is the responsibility of all employees to:

- be involved in and support the rehabilitation of an injured employee at the workplace.

The following questions are to help employers and employees to consider how rehabilitation might be improved at the workplace.

Q Does your workplace have a written rehabilitation policy?

Q Is the policy:

- signed by management?
- endorsed by unions, if represented in the workplace?
- communicated to all employees?

Q Does the policy outline rehabilitation procedures for people injured at your workplace?

A CO-ORDINATOR

Q Has a rehabilitation co-ordinator been appointed at your workplace?

Q Does that person:

- maintain regular contact with injured employees who are off work, and with their treating doctors?
- inform the treating doctor about the injured person's job, and options for returning the employee to the workplace?
- involve the supervisor in developing return to work plans?
- monitor the injured worker's progress and address any problems that may arise?
- work together with rehabilitation providers, if they are involved?

RETURN TO WORK PROCEDURE

Q Does your workplace have rehabilitation procedures that ensure:

- injured employees are able to return gradually to work, perhaps for two hours a day initially, and building up to full time as their work capacity improves?
- selected, modified or alternative duties are made available where necessary?
- rehabilitees are given training for unfamiliar duties?
- injured workers finding difficulty returning to work, or off work for a long time, are referred to rehabilitation providers?
- a positive and supportive attitude is maintained towards injured workers on rehabilitation programs?
- clear time frames are set for the completion of rehabilitation programs?



FINDING SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE WORK

Q If injured employees are unable to return to their original job are they:

- placed in another suitable job available at the workplace?
- referred to a rehabilitation provider to help them obtain retraining and a suitable job at another workplace?

INSTRUCTION AND TRAINING

Q Do all employees at the workplace understand:

- the workers' compensation system?
- vocational rehabilitation?
- their role in rehabilitating others at the workplace?

FOR MORE INFORMATION

This booklet is for guidance only. For more information:

- Contact a rehabilitation consultant at WorkCover WA (388 5555)
- Phone the INFOLINE at WorkCover WA (388 5555)
- Read the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 1981.

WorkSafe Western Australia
PO Box 294
West Perth, Western Australia 6872
Phone (618) 9327 8777
Email: safety@worksafe.wa.gov.au

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