



Workplace rehabilitation providers and WorkCover

What to expect from your
workplace rehabilitation provider

This guide aims to provide workers and employers with information regarding the role of WorkCover NSW approved workplace rehabilitation providers in the NSW workers compensation system.

Workplace rehabilitation

The focus of the NSW workers compensation system is supporting workers to stay at, or return to, work following a work-related injury or illness. There is considerable evidence to demonstrate:

- workplace based interventions provide better outcomes for workers
- staying active promotes recovery and reduces the risk of long term disability and work loss
- an offer of suitable employment and active engagement of all parties (worker, employer, doctor, insurer and other providers) in return to work planning significantly reduces the duration and associated costs of workers compensation claims, and improves social and health outcomes for workers¹.

Workplace rehabilitation is a managed process involving timely intervention with appropriate and adequate services based on assessed need, which is aimed at supporting workers to stay at, or return to, work following a work-related injury or illness.

1 Institute of Health and Work, 2004. *Workplace-based Return-to-work interventions: A Systematic Review of the Qualitative and Quantitative literature*. Ontario.

What is a workplace rehabilitation provider?

Workplace rehabilitation providers identify and address the critical physical, psychological, social, environmental and organisational risk factors which may have an impact on a worker's ability to successfully return to work. Workplace rehabilitation providers are engaged to provide specialised expertise in addition to that generally provided by the employer or insurer.

Workplace rehabilitation provider organisations have appropriately qualified staff with skills, knowledge and experience to deliver rehabilitation services in the workplace. They consist of a team of health professionals such as occupational therapists, physiotherapists, exercise physiologists, rehabilitation counsellors and psychologists. Services are provided in consultation with the worker, employer, treating doctor, and insurer.

To ensure quality service delivery workplace rehabilitation providers are approved by WorkCover under the Nationally Consistent Approval Framework for Workplace Rehabilitation Providers. This framework provides *Conditions of Approval* and *Principles of workplace rehabilitation* which must be met by workplace rehabilitation providers in order to retain approval to deliver services in the NSW workers compensation system. For more information refer to the *Guide: Nationally Consistent Approval Framework for Workplace Rehabilitation Providers* on the Heads of Workers Compensation Authorities website: hwca.org.au

Workplace rehabilitation services

Return to work with the same employer

Workplace rehabilitation providers can be engaged to provide a single service (eg a workplace assessment) or, depending on the needs of the worker and employer, they may provide ongoing support until a worker has achieved a durable return to work.

Workplace rehabilitation services may involve:

- assessing a worker's current work capacity, and the work environment, work duties, and work demands
- identifying, and designing strategies to address, any barriers or risks that may impact a worker's recovery and return to work outcome
- advice about options for reducing work demands eg equipment, job modification, or workplace modifications
- identifying or recommending work duties/tasks that are suitable for a worker
- educating about the health benefits of safe work, and using work to facilitate recovery from injury
- consulting and negotiating with a worker, employer, insurer, treating doctor and union (if involved)
- developing agreed goals and recommending the type and extent of workplace rehabilitation services needed to achieve the agreed return to work outcome
- designing and implementing a plan to achieve a gradual upgrade in a worker's capacity for work
- actively reviewing a worker's progress to facilitate a timely upgrade in work capacity, and promptly address any barriers or risks that might delay progress
- ensuring the worker achieves a durable return to suitable employment.

Return to work with a new employer

Most workers are able to return to suitable employment with their pre-injury employer following a work related injury. However, where this is not possible, workplace rehabilitation providers can provide support to assist a worker to obtain suitable employment with a new employer. This may involve:

- assessing of a worker's work capacity, interests, transferable skills, education and experience
- identifying suitable employment options within the labour market
- organising training if necessary to gain suitable employment
- helping a worker develop job seeking skills
- providing assistance in obtaining suitable employment
- accessing available programs and services to assist a worker to gain suitable employment.

For more information about services provided by workplace rehabilitation providers refer to:

- *Guide: Nationally Consistent Approval Framework for Workplace Rehabilitation Providers* on the Heads of Workers Compensation Authorities website: hwca.org.au
- *NSW Supplement to Guide: Nationally Consistent Approval Framework for Workplace Rehabilitation Providers* on the WorkCover website: workcover.nsw.gov.au

Engaging a workplace rehabilitation provider

Generally an employer, insurer or treating doctor will use their experience and industry knowledge to recommend a particular workplace rehabilitation provider. A worker has a say in choosing a provider and should be consulted regarding the referral.

The costs of workplace rehabilitation services are paid by the insurer, and are recorded as a claims cost. It is therefore the role of the insurer to engage a workplace rehabilitation provider prior to commencement of any rehabilitation services. The workplace rehabilitation provider will discuss the assessed needs of the worker and employer with the insurer and provide recommendations regarding the need for workplace rehabilitation services.

Questions you may wish to ask your workplace rehabilitation provider

Worker:

- What can I do to assist my recovery and return to work?
- What assistance will you provide to assist me to return to my job?
- What can my employer do to help?
- How often should I expect to see you or hear from you?
- How and when should I contact you?
- If I can't return to work with my pre-injury employer, what programs or resources can you offer to help me get a job with a different employer?

Employer:

- Do you have staff with particular expertise with this type of injury and/or situation?
- How will you assist our worker to stay at, or return to, work?
- How long do you expect this will take?
- What can I do to assist?
- What is your success rate and average cost for such services?

Vocational rehabilitation programs

WorkCover funds a range of programs to assist a worker to retain their job or to get a new job where necessary.

Work trial

On-the-job work experience for up to 12 weeks to help a worker upgrade their work capacity and/or gain new work skills.

Return to work assist for micro employers

Designed to assist micro employers (five full time employees or less and a basic tariff premium of \$30,000 or less) to provide suitable work tasks to support a worker to recover at work in the first 13 weeks of a claim.

Retraining

A formal course of training with an established educational institution to gain necessary qualifications and skills to gain suitable employment.

Equipment or workplace modifications

Provision of equipment or workplace modifications to reduce work demands to enable the worker to return to work or participate in retraining.

Transition to work

Financial assistance to address immediate or short term barriers or needs preventing a worker accepting an offer of suitable employment.

JobCover Placement Program

A suite of incentives for eligible employers to encourage provision of ongoing suitable employment for an injured worker who is unable to return to work with their pre-injury employer, including:

- financial incentive for up to 12 months designed to offset the cost of engaging a new worker
- exclusion of the worker's wages from premium calculations for up to two years
- protection against further costs associated with the existing injury for up to two years.

Need help?

Concerns about workplace rehabilitation providers should be discussed with the manager of the workplace provider organisation. If this does not address the issue contact your insurer case manager who is responsible for engaging the provider. The insurer will advise WorkCover if necessary to report any concerns relating to the provider's conformance with the *Conditions of Approval*. If, with the assistance of the insurer case manager, the issue is still not resolved you may choose to talk with the insurer about whether it would be helpful to approve referral to a different workplace rehabilitation provider.

For a list of current WorkCover accredited rehabilitation providers, visit the WorkCover website: workcover.nsw.gov.au or call WorkCover on **13 10 50**.

Disclaimer

This publication may contain work health and safety and workers compensation information. It may include some of your obligations under the various legislations that WorkCover NSW administers. To ensure you comply with your legal obligations you must refer to the appropriate legislation.

Information on the latest laws can be checked by visiting the NSW legislation website legislation.nsw.gov.au

This publication does not represent a comprehensive statement of the law as it applies to particular problems or to individuals or as a substitute for legal advice.

You should seek independent legal advice if you need assistance on the application of the law to your situation.

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