

SERMA CONFERENCE 2025



VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

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AGENDA

- ✓ **SMD PROCESS**
- ✓ **WHAT IS VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION?**
- ✓ **MISCONCEPTIONS OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION**
- ✓ **THE VOCATIONAL HIERARCHY**
- ✓ **THE VOCATIONAL PROCESS**
- ✓ **EXPECTATIONS OF INJURED WORKER**
- ✓ **BEHIND THE SCENES**
- ✓ **RED FLAGS OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION**
- ✓ **QUESTIONS?**

STATE MEDICAL DIRECTOR PROCESS

- **THE AGENCY MAKES A REFERRAL TO CONCENTRA FOR THE STATE MEDICAL DIRECTOR TO SEE IF AN INJURED WORKER CAN RETURN TO WORK AFTER THEIR INJURY AND PERIOD OF RECOVERY.**
- **IF THE STATE MEDICAL DIRECTOR DETERMINES THAT THE PERSON CANNOT RETURN TO THEIR PRE-INJURY JOB, THE AGENCY DETERMINES WHAT THE OPTIONS ARE.**
- **IT IS IMPORTANT TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE ASSIGNED ADJUSTER BEFORE AN SMD REFERRAL IS MADE TO AVOID CONFLICT WITH IMES.**
- **IF ANOTHER JOB CANNOT BE FOUND WITHIN THE STATE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE INJURED WORKER'S RESTRICTIONS, IWIF MAKES THE DETERMINATION IF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION IS APPROPRIATE.**

WHAT IS VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION?

- **VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION IS A RETURN-TO-WORK SERVICE FOR AN INJURED WORKER UNABLE TO RETURN TO THEIR PRIOR OCCUPATION.**
- **A VOCATIONAL CASE MANAGER IS A VOCATIONAL EXPERT THAT IS REGISTERED THROUGH THE WORKERS COMPENSATION COMMISSION. THE GOAL IS TO HELP THE INJURED WORKERS RETURN TO THE WORKFORCE BY UTILIZING THEIR TRANSFERABLE SKILLS AT THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE WAGES AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. ANALYTICS SHOW THAT THE LONGER AN INJURED WORKER IS OUT OF WORK THE WORST THE OUTCOME.**
- **COMAR REGULATIONS REQUIRE A VOCATIONAL CASE MANAGER TO ACT IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE INJURED WORKER AND TO COMMUNICATE WITH BOTH THE CARRIER AND THE CLAIMANT ATTORNEY REGARDING THE STATUS OF A VOCATIONAL FILE.**

MISCONCEPTIONS OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

- SOME ATTORNEYS AND INJURED WORKERS BELIEVE THAT VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION MEANS THAT AN INJURED WORKER WILL GO THROUGH A FORMAL RETRAINING PROGRAM OR THAT THEY ARE ENTITLED TO EARN THE SAME OR GREATER THAN THEIR PREINJURY INCOME.
- NOT JUST HELPING TO FIND A JOB WITHIN THE STATE, BUT ALSO PRIVATE SECTOR.
- THE WCC STATES THAT VOCATIONAL CASE MANAGERS ARE REQUIRED TO ASSIST INJURED WORKERS IN RETURNING TO “**SUITABLE GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT**”

VOCATIONAL HIERARCHY

- ✓ RETURN TO WORK SAME EMPLOYER SAME JOB
- ✓ RETURN TO MODIFIED JOB SAME EMPLOYER
- ✓ RETURN TO SAME EMPLOYER DIFFERENT JOB
- ✓ RETURN TO NEW JOB DIFFERENT EMPLOYER
- ✓ OJT
- ✓ FORMAL RETRAINING
- ✓ SELF EMPLOYMENT

VOCATIONAL PROCESS

- ✓ INITIAL ASSESSMENT
- ✓ VOCATIONAL TESTING
- ✓ JOB SEEKING SKILLS TRAINING
/ ADA / HIPAA / EXPECTATIONS /
HOW TO MARKET SELF AND RESPOND TO DIFFICULT QUESTIONS
- ✓ MOCK INTERVIEWS
- ✓ FORMAL VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PLAN
- ✓ WEEKLY VOCATIONAL MEETING WITH THE EXPECTATIONS OF FULLTIME EFFORT
- ✓ DEPENDING ON HOW THE JOB SEARCH GOES, A RETRAINING MAY BE EXPLORED IF A REASONABLE EFFORT IS BEING MADE BUT JOB AVAILABILITY IS LIMITED FOR SUITABLE GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT WITHIN THE CURRENT SKILL SET
- ✓ ONCE RETURN TO WORK, MONITOR AND PREPARE FOR CLOSURE OF THE VOCATIONAL ASSIGNMENT

EXPECTATIONS OF INJURED WORKERS

- **VOCATIONAL SERVICES WILL REQUIRE THE INJURED WORKER TO PUT FORTH A FULL TIME 40-HOUR WEEK EFFORT INTO LOCATING EMPLOYMENT.**
- **THE INJURED WORKER WILL BE REQUIRED TO ATTEND WEEKLY MEETINGS, COMPLETE JOB LEADS PROVIDED BY THE CASE MANAGER AND COMPLETE 10-15 INDEPENDENT JOB LEADS WEEKLY.**
- **THE INJURED WORKER WILL BE EXPECTED TO FOLLOW UP WITH PENDING APPLICATIONS AND TO DOCUMENT ALL EFFORTS.**
- **THE INJURED WORKER MAY BE REQUIRED TO ATTEND GED OR COMPUTER SKILLS IF NECESSARY.**
- **“EVERY ACTION CREATES A REACTION” AN INJURED WORKER WILL WRITE THEIR OWN STORY OF SUCCESS OR NONCOMPLIANCE.**

BEHIND THE SCENES

- **THE COUNSELOR MAKES FOLLOW UP CALLS TO HELP GENERATE FEEDBACK**
- **THE COUNSELOR CAN FACILITATE INTERVIEWS**
- **THE COUNSELOR HAS ONGOING COMMUNICATIONS WITH ALL PARTIES**

RED FLAGS

- OUT OF WORK FOR OVER A YEAR
- NO GED/LITERACY/COMPUTER SKILLS
- CANE NOT PRESCRIBED
- TRANSPORTATION/CHILDCARE ISSUES
- IW BELIEVES THAT HE OR SHE IS NOT CAPABLE OF WORKING
- IW FEELS ENTITLED TO UNREALISTIC SERVICES/OUTCOMES.
- IW BELIEVES THAT HE OR SHE NEEDS ADDITIONAL MEDICAL TREATMENT
- CRIMINAL BACKGROUND
- MEDICAL MARIJUANA

QUESTIONS?