Rehabilitation and Compensation

– Rehabilitation

Workers getting back to work >

This information bulletin is about rehabilitation and workers returning to work.

Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is the process of restoring a persons' capacity to the highest possible level of function following a work-related injury or illness.

The goal of rehabilitation is to return the worker to the workplace as soon as it is appropriate. This bulletin outlines some of the processes involved.

How can workers be referred to rehabilitation?

Referral to rehabilitation services can be arranged by the:

- treating doctor;
- insurer;
- employer;
- treating rehabilitation provider;
- union delegate;
- self.

The insurer must approve the referral before rehabilitation can proceed.

Worker's responsibilities

The worker may need to undergo reasonable medical, surgical and rehabilitation treatment and must co-operate with this.

- The worker's rehabilitation may involve doing different duties until they are fit for their former work.
- If the worker is unable to return to their former job, he or she may need to be retrained for other work.
- If rehabilitation is recommended, the worker must participate in order to keep receiving income maintenance payments. Benefits may be reduced or cancelled if the worker unreasonably refuses to participate.
- The worker is also required to inform their employer if they commence employment elsewhere, or circumstances change in a way which may affect their entitlements.

Employer's responsibilities

The employer must assist with any rehabilitation program and take all reasonable steps to provide or obtain suitable employment.

Worker's entitlements

The worker is entitled to costs reasonably incurred for:

- medical, surgical and rehabilitation treatment;
- hospitalisation in a public or private hospital;
- pharmaceutical expenses;
- travelling or being transported to and from any place in order to attend for treatment or hospitalisation, including kilometer allowance;
- accommodation costs incurred while away from the normal place of residence to attend for treatment;
- upgrading of job skills or training for a different career if it is not otherwise possible to obtain suitable employment;
- workplace, vehicle and home modifications;
- household services, e.g. domestic help;
- attendant care services.

Rehabilitation services

Rehabilitation services may include the following:

- physiotherapy and occupational therapy services;
- chiropractic and other required treatment services;
- education and counselling on ways of adjusting and coping with injury;
- graded work-conditioning programs;
- workplace assessment and advice;
- liaison with the employer;
- advice on other work possibilities.

Getting back to work

To take advantage of existing skills, it is usually less disruptive and easier for the worker to keep working for their current employer.

If this is not possible the employer and the insurer have an obligation to try to find a job with a new employer. The worker must actively co-operate with this process which should be managed by an accredited vocational rehabilitation provider.

For as long as the compensable injury restricts the worker's capacity to earn, he or she will continue to receive benefits until pre-injury earning capacity is reached or until they reach retirement age, whichever is the earlier. More details about weekly benefits are available from NT WorkSafe upon request.

If the worker is dismissed from their place of employment, the employer is still liable to pay workers' compensation entitlements for the duration of the incapacity and treatment.

If the worker is declared fit for their pre-injury employment, the incapacity benefits will cease, even if suitable work is not available.

If the worker is considering resigning while under a rehabilitation program they should seek advice as this may affect their entitlements.

Disputes

If a dispute arises concerning rehabilitation or other claim matters, this should firstly be discussed with the insurer. If this does not satisfactorily resolve the issue, contact NT WorkSafe for advice.

More detailed information on resolving disputes is set out in NT WorkSafe bulletin 13.01.12. Compensation - Disputes.

Rehabilitation

Contact NT WorkSafe on 1800 250 713.

NT WorkSafe >

GPO Box 1722

Darwin NT 0801

Telephone: 1800 250 713
Facsimile: (08) 8999 5141
Email: ntworksafe@nt.gov.au
Website: worksafe.nt.gov.au