

NORTHERN TERRITORY
Supplement to the Guide:
Nationally Consistent Approval Framework
for Workplace Rehabilitation Providers

“the Supplement”

NTWorkSafe

For the purposes of this Application, the term ‘workplace rehabilitation provider’ means ‘vocational rehabilitation provider’ as stated in the *Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2008* and are used interchangeably.

NT WorkSafe is the administrative arm of the Work Health Authority and administers the *Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act*.

1. Introduction

The Heads of Workers' Compensation Authorities (HWCA) endorsed a nationally consistent framework for the approval of workplace rehabilitation providers in June 2008. The details of the approval framework are contained in the HWCA document "*Guide: Nationally Consistent Approval Framework for Workplace Rehabilitation Providers*" ("the Guide").

The Work Health Authority has agreed to adopt the Guide subject to any amendments made by the Northern Territory Supplement to the Guide: Nationally Consistent Approval Framework for Workplace Rehabilitation Providers ("the Supplement") for the purpose of accrediting vocational rehabilitation providers pursuant to section 50 of the *Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2008* ("the Act").

Organisations should ensure they fully understand the framework contained in the Guide and the Supplement prior to making an application to the Work Health Authority to become an accredited vocational rehabilitation provider under the Act.

If the application is successful, an *Instrument of Approval* as a workplace rehabilitation provider will be issued for a 3-year period, until 30th June of the third year.

NT WorkSafe is the administrative arm of the Work Health Authority and will accept and process all applications for an accredited vocational rehabilitation provider for consideration by the Work Health Authority.

The Act states that a person, Agency or body is not to provide a vocational rehabilitation service to an injured worker unless the services are provided by an accredited vocational rehabilitation provider.

Rehabilitation is defined by the Act as:

"... the process necessary to ensure, as far as is practicable, having regard to community standards from time to time, that an injured worker is restored to the same physical, economic and social condition in which the worker was before suffering the relevant injury."

The purpose of this Supplement is to outline amendments NT WorkSafe has made to the Guide when assessing applications for an approved vocational rehabilitation provider. To this extent this Supplement should be read in conjunction with the Guide.

Vocational rehabilitation providers who have sought accreditation under another jurisdiction as their home jurisdiction, such as Comcare, will have their applications assessed in accordance with the cross jurisdiction accreditation principles outlined in the Guide.

Our outline of amendments is as follows:

Section 4. Principles of workplace rehabilitation

NT WorkSafe adheres to the Principles of Workplace Rehabilitation (“the Principles”) as outlined in the Guide.

However, NT WorkSafe makes the following amendments to the Principles that providers operating within the Northern Territory workers’ compensation system should address as part of the application and evaluation processes and their service delivery practices.

Section 4.1 SERVICE PROVISION PRINCIPLES

External providers not approved by NT WorkSafe, but identified as part of an approved vocational rehabilitation plan, can be utilised if coordinated and paid for through an approved vocational rehabilitation provider. The vocational rehabilitation provider must take reasonable steps to ensure that the external provider is appropriately qualified to deliver the service in accordance with the Guide and Supplement.

Section 4.2 ORGANISATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRINCIPLES

Section 4.2.1 Comprehensive and robust corporate governance infrastructure

While it is expected that a vocational rehabilitation provider will have a comprehensive and robust corporate governance infrastructure which allows them to collect data for the purposes of analysing and report provider performance to clients in accordance with principle 4.2.1 (d), it is noted that NT WorkSafe does not at this stage require the provision of data, however reserves the right to require such reporting in future in accordance with the conditions of approval.

Section 4.4 STAFF MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Section 4.4.1 Qualifications, knowledge and experience

NT WorkSafe adheres to this principle that a vocational rehabilitation provider has systems in place for ensuring that workplace rehabilitation consultants employed by it have the minimum qualifications outlined under principle 4.4.1.A of the Guide, and that the qualifications are verified. NT WorkSafe does not require the consultant to obtain the membership, accreditation or registration with the identified associations or registration boards.

NT WorkSafe does not limit the delivery of workplace rehabilitation services by designated professional groups however reserves the right to be able to do this in future.

A person who does not meet the minimum qualifications detailed for a workplace assessment, functional assessment or vocational assessment, can apply to NT WorkSafe for approval to deliver that service. Applicants must meet the minimum qualifications and experience for rehabilitation consultants and are required to demonstrate their competence to provide the specific workplace rehabilitation service for which the application is made.

NT WorkSafe recognises that there may be individuals within an organisation who do not meet the minimum qualifications. However these individuals are committed to achieving the minimum requirements. These individuals should contact NT WorkSafe for details on the application process.

Such approval if granted will allow these individuals to practice within an organisational structure for 12 months. These approvals may be renewed according to NT WorkSafe criteria.

Section 5. Approval Process

Section 5.1 APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL

NT WorkSafe adheres to the application for approval process as outlined in the Guide.

NT WorkSafe does not prescribe a fee in relation to an application under the Guide or Supplement.

Section 5.3 MONITORING OF PROVIDER PERFORMANCE

NT WorkSafe in principle adheres to the provider performance monitoring process as outlined in the Guide.

NT WorkSafe will monitor complaints records, self-evaluation reports, improvement/action plans, onsite evaluations and information supplied to NT WorkSafe by insurers.

It is noted that NT WorkSafe does not currently require data and performance reporting directly from vocational rehabilitation providers however reserves the right to require such data and performance reporting in future.

Section 5.3.1 Provider annual self-evaluations

Self-evaluation for NT providers must be done in accordance with the self-evaluation methodology established by NT WorkSafe. A suitable evaluation tool is still being developed.

NT WorkSafe expects self-evaluators to be appropriately experienced but will not insist on compliance with all of the criteria outlined in the Guide for the person or persons performing the self-evaluation.

Section 6. Conditions of Approval

NT WorkSafe adheres to the Conditions of Approval as outlined in the Guide subject to the amendments to the Principles of Workplace Rehabilitation identified in this Supplement.

In addition to amendments to the Principles of Workplace Rehabilitation outlined in this Supplement, the following amendments are made to the Conditions of Approval:

Condition 5

If the vocational rehabilitation provider has applied to the Northern Territory as its home jurisdiction and only operates within the Northern Territory workers compensation scheme, it must demonstrate management of 6 cases of workplace rehabilitation for each 12 month period within the three year approval.

Condition 6

NT WorkSafe does not set a minimum return to work rate, however reserves the right to require such reporting in the future in accordance with the conditions of approval.

Condition 7

This condition remains however it is noted that NT WorkSafe does not currently require the provision of data from vocational rehabilitation providers however reserves the right to require such data in future.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1 FEES

No fees are charged by NT WorkSafe.

APPENDIX 2 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Criteria for evaluators

NT WorkSafe may perform independent evaluations using either NT WorkSafe staff or external evaluators, however, these staff and evaluators may not meet the appropriate experience criteria.

However should the evaluation disclose serious matters that might affect the conditions of approval status, evaluators who meet the criteria will be engaged to determine conformance with the Conditions of Approval.

Evaluation process

NT WorkSafe adheres to the Evaluation process outlined in the Guide. NT WorkSafe will, however, determine the sample size for the purposes of an examination of worker case records on a case by case basis, noting that it will not be more than that set out in the Guide.

Assessing Conformity with the Conditions of Approval

NT WorkSafe adheres to the manner in which the Conditions of Approval as amended by this Supplement are evaluated for conformance.

Assessing conformity with the Principles of Workplace Rehabilitation

NT WorkSafe adheres to the manner in which the Principles of Workplace Rehabilitation as amended by this Supplement are evaluated for conformance, however, the following conformity ratings will be applied to the principles for each of the indicators:

Conformity – level 1

90% compliance with all indicators.

Conformity – level 2

At least 80% compliance with all indicators.

Nonconformity

Less than 80% compliance with all indicators.