The Work Reintegration Program Policy Consultation

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Case for Change

The RTW-LMR Model has not produced expected results

- RTW outcomes deteriorated at every measured time point.
- 77% of workers in LMR (retraining for new jobs with new employers) have re-employment rights but do not RTW with the injury employer.
- The number and level of "locked in" Loss of Earnings awards has been rising.
- 1 in 4 workers do not agree with their LMR Program, significantly affecting completion and employment prospects.
- Workers have raised numerous and persistent complaints to the media (Toronto Star), through social networking (Face Book), to the Fair Practices Commission and the Ontario Ombudsman, about quality of training and education programs and their lack of credibility with employers.
- Re-training programs over the past decade through external vendors have not produced desired results, costs doubled.

The New Work Reintegration Program

- The WSIB is committed to operating a leading practice Work Reintegration program for supporting injured workers as they return to employment – either with their original employer or in the open job market.

- Work Reintegration (WR) is a term that's used around the world to describe the various processes of return to work, vocational rehabilitation, labour market re-entry, and disability management.

- WR encompasses the end-to-end process of return to work from the time a person is injured or becomes ill, until they are back to work. The term does not compartmentalize return to work and labour market re-entry; it removes the "bright line" between return to work and labour market re-entry.

- The new WR program is based on a comprehensive internal review of the RTW and LMR programs, international best practices, consultations with workers and employers, and the 2009 KPMG Value for Money Audit.

KPMG Recommendations

- Create and implement a single work re-integration and governance framework based on leading practice, make substantive changes to policy and incentive frameworks, and acquire the internal expertise to manage the work re-integration program.
- Increase employers' accountability for the retention and accommodation of their injured workers.
- Adopt more aggressive cost containment/cost management strategies, including establishing fixed service fees and introducing outcome based performance incentives.
- Strengthen service quality assurance programs and ensure appropriate oversight.
- Develop strategies to provide injured workers with more work re-integration pathways and choice, and opportunities for greater input into vocational options and plans.
- Create and implement a responsive and independent complaint management system for LMR recipients.

Leading Practices

Across jurisdictions, there are several recurring, common themes in system, program and service reform aimed at improving work reintegration outcomes for the disabled.

- Work Reintegration is a shared responsibility
- Increased employer responsibility
- Increased support to employers
- Incenting behaviour
- Increased emphasis on disability management within workplaces
- Professionalization of WR staff
- Client-Centred Vocational Rehabilitation
- Self Determination
- Strategies for Diversity
- Limits on vocational rehabilitation
- Mainstreaming
- Activating partial work capacity
- Supported Employment
- Accountability

Vision, Goal and Principles

- The Vision - Reintegration to decent, safe , and sustainable employment

- The Goal - Employment. Workers need and want jobs, as opposed to being employable, but with poor prospects for employment

- The Principles
  - Maintain the employment relationship, wherever possible, between the worker and the injury employer, all parties have a shared obligation.
  - Reintegrate workers into decent, safe and sustainable work, maintaining the dignity of the worker.
  - Provide effective and meaningful input and choice on the part of the worker,
  - Maintain high standards for services provided by WSIB staff, contracted parties, to ensure effective, quality services that achieve desired employment outcomes.
  - Manage the costs of the program but do not be managed by the cost.
  - Ensure workers are fairly compensated for wage loss, recognizing the difference between pre-injury earnings and post-injury earning ability.

Key Features of the Program

- **Integrated and timely** work reintegration services
- Increased **integration of health recovery and RTW**
- Increased on-site WSIB support with a **fluid transition between RTW and Work Transition functions**
- **Worksite functional assessments**
- **Assistance to small business** with accommodation expenses if they would cause undue hardship
- WSIB Work Transition services will be delivered by **qualified and experienced rehabilitation professionals**
- **Face-to-face meeting** between the injured worker, Case Manager and Work Transition Specialist will be held when work transition planning begins, and throughout the provision of services
- **Enhanced communication approach** with an emphasis on in-person contact wherever possible
- **Expedited** case review
- **Fast – track** appeals
- **Sound** vocational assessments
- Assessment results will be **shared directly with the injured worker**
- **Increased time** will be provided for the injured worker to explore and decide on a suitable occupation
- A **rigorous approach** to determining a quality Suitable Occupation.
- **WSIB Labour Market expertise** will be made available to identify future employment prospects
- A more **flexible approach** will be used to finalizing the choice of suitable occupation.
- More weight will be given to **the injured worker's input** into the Suitable Occupation selection and training program
- **The employer will now be an active participant** in the creation of the injured worker's Work Transition Plan
- **Training on the job** will be arranged by the WSIB with the injury employer, or a new employer
- Support of a **Student Success Advisor** at Community Colleges
- **Mainstreaming** with other mature students
- **Increased expectations of Private Career Colleges**.
- **Injured worker and employer surveys conducted** at key points throughout the Work Reintegration process
- **Increased management oversight** of key decisions will be implemented to ensure fairness and sound decision-making
- **Placement provider incentives** will be payable upon placement and job retention at three months
- **Strong program monitoring and evaluation**
- **Annual reporting** of program performance