

Return-to-Work Customer Surveys

December 2003 — January 2004

Summary

Vocational Consultant Survey

This survey was administered to staff who help injured workers return to work, who work for private rehabilitation organizations, insurers, and government agencies.

70% indicated the complexity of the RTW system (three separate programs) is an obstacle to returning injured workers to work at least occasionally, and 22% indicated this is often or usually a problem.

Provision of **optional services** (vocational assistance provided outside the rules) is common, especially placement assistance.

The **Employer at Injury** (EAIP) program is very popular; especially wage subsidy, but many commented that all aspects work well. Fear of having to pay back funds used for worksite modification was the most commonly cited difficulty. Suggestions included an awareness campaign about the EAIP, less paperwork to justify reimbursements, and various approaches to easing use of worksite modification (pre-approval, quicker approval, allowing more time to use it).

All aspects of the **Preferred Worker Program** (PWP) are popular, especially wage subsidy. Complaints include the time it takes to process worksite modifications, eligibility determinations, and obtained employment purchases (in that order). The most often cited suggestion was expediting processes.

Vocational assistance is generally felt to work well, but problem areas identified include difficulty using labor market data, inconsistency or bias in dispute resolution, and elimination from eligibility of lower wage earners. The most often cited suggestions for improvement were clarifying rules, streamlining processes, solving the labor market issues, and providing more assistance to workers who don't meet eligibility criteria.

continued

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Injured Workers Who Used RTW Programs

This survey was administered to injured workers who use one or more of the RTW programs, even if eligibility was ended prior to completion (for example, when eligibility for vocational assistance was ended because of CDA).

Most who returned to transitional work under the **EAIP** were satisfied with the explanations they received from their employers about that process. 59% thought the duration of the transitional work was just right and 74% thought the job was a good fit for them. 42% report ultimately returning to their regular work and an additional 8% returned to regular work with modifications.

The **PWP** was considered very important by those who used it, and 95% said they would use it again or recommend it to a friend. A large majority of them expressed satisfaction with the time it took to determine eligibility, the time it took to get clothing, tools, and worksite modifications, the ease of the PWP process and paperwork, and the degree to which the PWP met their needs.

59% were satisfied or very satisfied with the outcome of their **vocational assistance**. Training was considered very important by those who used it. However, only 48% said they completed vocational assistance.

Of those who did not complete because of a **CDA**, the most commonly cited reasons were the need for settlement money, and the advice of their attorneys.

continued

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Employers Who Have Recently Used RTW Programs

This survey included employers who have used the EAIP and/or the PWP. It also included a sampling of employers who hired injured workers after completion of vocational assistance. This portion of the sample was identified by obtaining employer contacts from private rehabilitation organizations.

96% of employers who have used the **EAIP** said they would use it again. Wage reimbursement and positive influences on the injured worker (attitude, production, and other) were the most often cited benefits to using the program. Suggestions for improvement in the EAIP focused on streamlining paperwork and the approval and reimbursement processes.

92% of employers who have used the **PWP** said they would use it again. All parts of the program were considered valuable. 85% said they were not familiar with the Preferred Worker Job Match on the internet.

The greatest benefit seen by employers to hiring a worker at the completion of **vocational assistance** was having an already-trained employee.

continued

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Injured Workers Who Didn't Use RTW Programs

This survey included injured workers who have permanent disability or had a Claim Disposition Agreement, but have not received EAIP, PWP or vocational assistance benefits.

Of those who were surveyed, 33% said they are looking for employment. 38% of those who are not looking for employment said they have obtained satisfactory employment. For those looking for employment, the most frequently cited difficulty is that they can no longer do pre-injury work and lack skills for other jobs. Asked what service they need, they most often cited training, and help to find a job.

94% of those eligible for the **PWP** said they plan to use it. Some fear revealing themselves as an injured worker and some aren't sure what the benefits are. 59% said they didn't know they could use the PWP with their employer at injury. 68% have not used the PWP Job Match, most often because they didn't know about it.

continued

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Employers Who Haven't Used RTW Programs

This survey included employers who have never used the EAIP or the PWP. 67% of the employers who responded to the survey said there has never been an injury in their company.

The majority of employers claimed not to be familiar with the **EAIP** (76%). Most (54%) of those familiar or somewhat familiar with the EAIP said they might use it in the future.

The majority of employers claimed not to be familiar with the **PWP** (79%). Of those familiar or somewhat familiar with the PWP, only (41%) said they might use it in the future.

74% of employers who responded claimed not to be familiar with **vocational assistance**.

41 of the 152 employers who responded to the survey (27%) requested information about financial incentives for hiring injured workers.