

# Return to Work Placement Guidelines for Out of Scope Employees

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## Introduction

This process applies to out-of-scope employees who have been in receipt of income replacement benefits through; Disability Income Plan (DIP) benefits, Workers' Compensation Benefits (WCB) or Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI), and are ready to return to work. Supporting medical evidence is required to begin the rehabilitation process. The *Employment Accommodation Policy (705)* provides guidelines for determining reasonable accommodation and may help to identify options during the return to work (RTW) process.

When dealing with a non adjudicated request for an accommodation managers should refer to the *Employment Accommodation Policy (705)* and to the *Manager's Guide to Accommodation and Return to Work* in the Human Resource Manual.

## If Claiming Disability Income Plan Benefits

- Once the Public Employees Benefits Agency (PEBA) receives a completed DIP application form, the file is referred to either the Occupational Rehabilitation Group of Canada or Northern Rehabilitation and Consulting Services Inc.
- No action is taken on the file until the Great-West Life Assurance Company approves the claim for benefits.
- The rehabilitation provider is copied on all correspondence in the employee's file. Upon notification of an approved claim, they open the file and assign it to an individual rehabilitation consultant.
- The consultant then contacts the employee within two weeks of notification to do a home visit and initial assessment. An exception may be made if the employee is too ill to meet with the consultant. For example, the employee is in the final stages of a terminal illness, or hospitalized.
- The report of the initial assessment with recommendations for rehabilitation action is provided to PEBA and to the Great-West Life Assurance Company.
- If the rehabilitation consultant deems it appropriate, contact is made with the employee's health care provider and employer to obtain information to formulate the rehabilitation plan, or if it appears that a return to work in some capacity may soon be possible.
- Once the rehabilitation consultant receives the health care provider's approval for a gradual or modified RTW, the consultant meets with the employee and employer to formulate a written RTW proposal for the employee, employer and physician to review and sign.
- The plan is then finalized and the employee commences the RTW.
- The written plan identifies roles and includes specific actions that should be taken by the employee and employer if there are problems or adjustments need to be made.
- The rehabilitation consultant follows up frequently with the employee and employer during this time, to ensure that the RTW is progressing as planned.

## Compensation during the RTW Process

- During the gradual RTW, the employer is required to pay the employee's salary for the time he or she is at work.
- The employer reports the earnings to the benefit provider on a monthly basis, and the benefit provider pays the employee a rehabilitation benefit for the time that they are not at work.
- When the employee has achieved full time hours, the rehabilitation consultant may follow up for a short period of time (around two weeks). If no problems are reported, the rehabilitation file is closed.

## Funding Sources

- During the gradual RTW, the employer is required to pay the employee's salary for the time he or she is at work.
- The employer reports the earnings to the benefit provider on a monthly basis, and the benefit provider pays the employee a rehabilitation benefit for the time that they are not at work.

- When the employee has achieved full time hours, the rehabilitation consultant may follow up for a short period of time (around two weeks). If no problems are reported, the rehabilitation file is closed.
- Funding is available from the DIP for transferable skills analysis, physical demands analysis, functional capacity evaluations, physiotherapy, counseling, etc.
- A need for these services and assessments must be demonstrated by the medical information on the file, and the rehabilitation consultant must recommend that the provision of these services and assessments is likely to facilitate a RTW in the future, or promote the successful outcome of a RTW program that is in progress.
- Any other available funding sources, such as extended health plans or employee assistance programs must be exhausted before funding will be approved through the DIP. The rehabilitation consultant confirms that other sources of funding have been exhausted before making a request for funding from the DIP.

## Ongoing Medical Treatment

If treatment for the medical condition is ongoing, or a surgery is required before a RTW can be considered, the rehabilitation consultant stays in contact with the employee and his or her physician so that active rehabilitation can be implemented when the employee is ready.

- If the employee has a chronic or progressive medical condition and an improvement or RTW is unlikely, the rehabilitation consultant reviews the file on an annual basis by visiting the claimant and obtaining an update.
- As part of this process, the rehabilitation consultant will start more active rehabilitation if there has been a change in the medical status, and assist the employee to access available community resources when required to address quality of life issues.

## If the Employee is Unable to Return to Work

- If there is no vocational potential and the employee does not want or does not need assistance with accessing community resources, the rehabilitation file may be closed if approved by the DIP Advisory Council.
- A small amount of funding may be provided by the DIP on approval of the Dip Advisory Council for quality of life assistance, if a need is demonstrated and all other sources of funding have been exhausted.

## If Claiming Workers Compensation and SGI Income Replacement Benefits

- WCB representatives and vocational rehabilitation consultants contracted by SGI will work with departmental managers, human resources and the employee in exploring RTW options.
- The Public Service Commission will provide advice and guidance at the request of the benefit provider, the ministry or the employee.
- A variety of options and approaches may be explored such as; early intervention, vocational rehabilitation, assessment and retraining.