

# **Vocational Rehabilitation**

**for**

## **Injured Employees**

### **Help in Returning to Work**

- **Counseling**
- **Guidance**
- **Retraining**
- **Job-Placement Assistance**



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF  
**LABOR & ECONOMIC  
OPPORTUNITY**

**WORKERS' DISABILITY  
COMPENSATION AGENCY**

Under Section 319 of the Michigan Workers' Disability Compensation Act, injured employees are entitled to vocational rehabilitation services if they are unable to perform the work for which they have previous training or experience.

Vocational rehabilitation can include a variety of support and guidance services. For instance, it could be as simple as your employer making a minor change in your job so that you can return to work within your medical restrictions. If this is not possible and you need more assistance, a professional rehabilitation counselor could work with you and an employer to facilitate a return to work performing the same or different job within your skills and abilities. Finally, if it is not possible for you to return to employment with your current skills, the rehabilitation counselor may help you obtain further education and training.

### **Is vocational rehabilitation important?**

Vocational rehabilitation is very important, and is truly a benefit to all parties. It can help employees identify interests, skills and abilities, provide job readiness assistance, outline career objectives, and facilitate successful return to work. For employers, rehabilitation counselors help identify and overcome barriers to return to work, provide ergonomic assessments, facilitate supervisor awareness training, and decrease disability-related costs by helping employees return to work quickly and safely.

Vocational rehabilitation services create a "win-win" scenario, especially when utilized as an early intervention tool.

### **Who is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services?**

Vocational rehabilitation services are paid for by the employer/insurance carrier. To be eligible, in most cases you must have an open workers' compensation claim due to an injury or illness which prevents you from returning to a job you have previous training or experience in.

### **How can you get this assistance?**

When vocational rehabilitation is needed, the workers' compensation insurance carrier is encouraged to voluntarily provide such services. If this does not happen, you may have to request rehabilitation services yourself, and the Workers' Compensation Agency may also order a vocational evaluation when necessary.

It is suggested that you contact your employer or insurance carrier to discuss the possibility of a return to work plan or a vocational rehabilitation program. If you have difficulty getting help, phone or write the Workers' Compensation Agency. A rehabilitation consultant will assist you.

## **What services are included?**

Vocational rehabilitation services are individually tailored to meet your specific needs. You and your rehabilitation counselor will work together to decide what is best for you. Rehabilitation services may include one or more of the following:

*Counseling* – Guidance in selecting the job suitable for you; instruction in job-search techniques; and help in adjusting to your disability.

*Vocational Assessment* – Evaluation of your skills, aptitudes, interests, and physical abilities to help you decide on an appropriate occupation and develop a rehabilitation plan.

*On-the-Job Training* – Assistance in arranging the period of training for a particular vocation under the guidance of a cooperating employer willing to hire you after your training period.

*Short-Term Retraining* – When necessary to obtain employment, a worker is entitled to 52 weeks of training, treatment or service. In special cases, the agency may order up to an additional 52 weeks of training. Costs of tuition, fees, books, and supplies are paid directly by the employer or insurance carrier.

*Job Placement Assistance* – Assistance in matching your particular capabilities and job requirements with a suitable employer and work situation.

*Costs of Transportation and Other Expenses* – Reimbursement of transportation costs for travel to doctor or rehabilitation appointments, including vocational activities. If you have special needs, items such as appliances, vehicle hand controls, tools, uniforms, or other adaptive devices may also be supplied as part of your rehabilitation program.

## **What if the job I obtain pays less?**

In the event you return to work at a job that pays less than what you were earning at the time of your injury, you are entitled to partial compensation benefits. The insurance carrier or the agency can help you to determine the amount of payments you should receive.

## **Dispute Resolution Process**

If the parties cannot agree on a rehabilitation program or the choice of vocational provider, any one of the parties or the agency may request a vocational rehabilitation hearing before the agency director or designee. A dispute resolution hearing may take place initially to help the parties mediate the issues. If this is unsuccessful, the director will conduct a hearing and render a written decision. This order can be appealed to the Michigan Compensation Appellate Commission.

## **Must a worker take part in vocational rehabilitation?**

Depending on the circumstances of the case, if the company offers vocational rehabilitation services and the worker refuses to cooperate, wage loss benefits may be reduced or suspended following a hearing.

### **You Should Expect...**

- To receive quality, objective services from an agency-approved rehabilitation counselor who adheres to a written Code of Ethics.
- To be an active and welcomed participant in the drafting of your rehabilitation plan.
- To be reimbursed for expenses incurred as part of the rehabilitation process, including travel costs (mileage to/from interviews, meetings with the counselor, and turning in job applications) and education expenses such as books, tuition, and fees if applicable.
- Your rehabilitation counselor to attempt to find employment consistent with your pre-injury position and wage level whenever possible. Telemarketing or commission sales positions are not appropriate job placement unless the employee has demonstrated aptitude or ability in this line of work. Long-term placements with rehabilitation organizations or employers subsidized by insurance carriers may also be inappropriate if they do not provide legitimate rehabilitation opportunities such as new work skills or restoring the employee to productivity in the labor market.
- Your rehabilitation counselor to adhere to the “3-Step Process” by considering return to work at your employer or community job placement, education/retraining, and self-employment as viable options depending on your situation.
- Your rehabilitation counselor to consider medical reports from examining and treating medical professional when developing your rehabilitation plan.
- Your rehabilitation counselor to refrain from providing legal advice.

For help or information, contact:

Workers' Disability Compensation Agency  
Vocational Rehabilitation Division  
P.O. Box 30016  
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Telephone: 888-396-5041  
Direct: 517-284-8900

[Workers' Disability Compensation Agency website](#)

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