

WAC 296-19A-050 What are vocational recovery services? (1) Vocational recovery services are intended to ensure appropriate support is provided to an industrially injured or ill worker so that they return to work, continue to work, or are enabled to become employable at gainful employment consistent with the priorities listed in RCW 51.32.095 (3)(a) through (g) with the highest priority given to returning a worker to employment:

- (a) Return to the previous job with the same employer;
- (b) Modification of the previous job with the same employer including transitional return to work;
- (c) A new job with the same employer in keeping with any limitations or restrictions;
- (d) Modification of a new job with the same employer including transitional return to work;
- (e) Modification of the previous job with a new employer;
- (f) A new job with a new employer or self-employment based upon transferable skills; and
- (g) Modification of a new job with a new employer.

(2) In each case referred to a vocational provider, the vocational recovery services include work disability prevention best practices identified by the department and periodically published through policy bulletins available from the department and recorded with the office of the code reviser. These best practice services include, but are not limited to, the following which must be addressed by the vocational provider prior to consideration of when and which of the priorities listed in subsection (1) of this section may be most appropriate for the worker:

- (a) Identify and, as appropriate, use their skills and professional judgment along with accessing available community resources that do not impose a cost on the department or injured worker to proactively address barriers that may interfere with or prevent the worker from returning to any work, including transitional or modified work;
- (b) Assist the worker in identifying return to work goals and steps necessary to achieve those goals, including participation by the worker in optional skill enhancement training that may be authorized and paid for by the department or self-insured employer; and
- (c) Assess the worker's potential preferred worker status, educating the worker and employer(s) on transitional and permanently modified work, the Washington stay at work program, and the preferred worker benefits, if appropriate.

(3) Vocational recovery services also include, but are not limited to, those described below specific to the priorities listed in RCW 51.32.095(3).

(a) When consistent with the worker's return to work goals (see subsection (2)(b) of this section), in evaluating the priorities listed in RCW 51.32.095 (3)(a) through (d) which involve return to work with the same employer, the vocational provider will:

- (i) Except for return to work at the previous job with the same employer, assist the worker with job readiness and job placement services, if applicable;
- (ii) Plan and work with the worker, the employer, the attending provider, and the department or self-insured employer to identify and pursue possible return to work opportunities and any necessary job modifications and prejob accommodations, when applicable;
- (iii) Work with the worker and the employer to develop job description(s) or job analysis(es) that include the physical demands necessary to perform the work. Vocational providers must use their

professional judgment when determining whether a job description or job analysis is appropriate, except during an ability to work assessment as outlined in WAC 296-19A-065 during which job analyses are required;

(iv) Based on the job description or descriptions, obtain approval from the attending provider that the job or jobs are appropriate for the worker's accepted condition(s), when applicable;

(v) Assist the employer with an offer of employment, and assist with resolution of disagreements about job offers, if needed;

(vi) Assist the employer with accessing return to work incentives such as those offered through the Washington stay at work and preferred worker programs, when applicable;

(vii) Document all offers of employment and the worker's response;

(viii) Monitor any return to work and assist in resolving barriers or concerns of the employer and/or worker, when applicable.

(b) When consistent with the worker's return to work goals (see subsection (2)(b) of this section), for the priorities listed in RCW 51.32.095 (3)(e) through (g) which involve return to work at a job with a new employer, the vocational provider will:

(i) Assist the worker with job readiness and job placement services, and in identifying opportunities through WorkSource partners and other organizations that support return to work;

(ii) Assist the worker to develop a resume or work history as a tool to identify the worker's knowledge, skills, and interests;

(iii) Plan and work with the worker, the new employer, if applicable, the attending provider, and the department or self-insured employer on necessary job modifications and prejob accommodations;

(iv) Work with the worker and with the new employer, if applicable, to develop a job description that includes the physical demands necessary to perform the work;

(v) Based on the job description or descriptions, obtain medical approval from the worker's attending provider that the job or jobs are appropriate for the worker's accepted conditions;

(vi) Assist the new employer with an offer of employment, if needed;

(vii) Assist the new employer with accessing return to work incentives such as those offered through the preferred worker program, if applicable;

(viii) Document all offers of employment and the worker's response;

(ix) Monitor any return to work and assist in resolving barriers or concerns of the employer and/or worker, when applicable.

(4) To ensure appropriate assistance has been provided or offered to the worker so that they return to work, continue to work, or are enabled to become employable as outlined in subsections (2) and (3) of this section the vocational provider must document their efforts to provide the services outlined in subsection (3)(a)(i) through (viii) and (b)(i) through (ix) of this section, including offers of employment and the worker's response(s), prior to requesting a referral for an ability to work assessment as described in WAC 296-19A-065.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 51.04.020, 51.04.030, 51.32.095, 51.32.096, and 51.32.250. WSR 24-23-082, s 296-19A-050, filed 11/19/24, effective 1/1/25. Statutory Authority: RCW 51.04.020, 51.04.030, 51.32.095, 51.36.100, and 51.36.110. WSR 19-21-149, § 296-19A-050, filed

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