

Client Handbook

Workers' Rehabilitation Services
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Welcome to Worker's Rehabilitation Services. The following information is intended to serve as a guideline for you as you work your way through the rehabilitation process.

The following information is intended to be an overview of our services and does not include all circumstances for all clients. We operate under a system of regulations, policies and practices which cannot be easily written in a few pages. Since each client is an individual and each case is unique, the process may vary somewhat, as needed.

The entire staff hopes that the information contained in this handbook will help you to have an enjoyable experience resulting in a successful outcome!

COUNSELING STATEMENT

Counseling in the Workers Rehabilitation Services (WRS) program is conducted according to a plan that provides flexibility for individual needs. As a client, we want you to know the qualifications of your Rehabilitation Coordinator (RC), how the counseling process will work and what you can expect of your Rehabilitation Coordinator during counseling sessions.

Credentials

All RCs in the Workers Rehabilitation Services program have a master's degree in counseling or a closely related field. Additionally, several of the RC's are Licensed Professional Counselors through the State of CT. Each RC must have a minimum of 7 years of professional experience in the field of counseling to be considered for hire. At present, all RCs have *at least* 15 years of experience specifically in the area of career counseling.

Process

Most people come to WRS as a result of a work related injury that has impacted on their ability to work in their usual job. As a result, they need to make changes in order to get their life back on track. This may require a change in one's life situation. During the counseling process we will explore your feelings and concerns and the changes you may need to make to reach a goal. When we both understand your situation, we will assist you in determining various ways to reach your goal, within the parameters of our services.

We will do our best to work with you to reach a feasible vocational goal within the parameters of our program as dictated by statute (State of Connecticut Regulations of State Agencies- Sec. 31-283a-1 through 31-283a-6).

For counseling to be most effective, you must make a commitment of time and energy and take an active part in the process. This may include activities ("homework") that you will be expected to do between counseling sessions to help you move toward your goal.

Counselor Responsibilities

Your RC will keep your information in confidence within the parameters of all Federal and State privacy laws. However, your RC may consult with another Workers Rehabilitation Services program professional about your situation and how to proceed in order to best help you. In such cases, your name will not be used unless the conversation is with the Supervisor of Rehabilitation Services. If you tell us you are going to harm either yourself or someone else, your RC is required by law to do anything he/she reasonably can in order to prevent that.

We have the right to request that you actively participate in the counseling process. While we will work with you to co-manage your counseling program, we reserve the right to make the final decision as to the level and type of services that will be provided to you.

Client Rights

You have the right to understand the counseling process and the reasons we make the suggestions that we do. We will try to explain the process clearly, but if you have **any** questions, please ask them. You have the right to refuse to do anything that we suggest...however, if you agree to participate in the program, you must abide by all regulations, policies and procedures that govern the program. If you are not in agreement with a decision as to the level and kind of services that will be provided to you, you will be advised of your right to appeal. You have the right at any time and for any reason to decide you do not wish to continue counseling or pursuing WRS services.

There are no charges to you for your participation in this program.

Addendum

At present we have 4 RCs on staff. This means that each Rehab Coordinator has to be responsible for 2 District Offices. Therefore, Rehab Coordinators will not be available in the same location every day.

Additionally the RCs are carrying large caseloads, making it difficult for the staff to devote as much time to each case as they would like. Therefore, please if this program is to be successful, you must be proactive...it is **your responsibility to "keep in contact"** with your Rehab Coordinator.

The number of counseling sessions scheduled and the time allotted for each session varies with each client and the objective that is being attempted. A meeting can be requested by either you or your RC.

Your RC will work as hard for you as you work for yourself. Your RC will first need to establish your eligibility for services. If eligible, you will be referred for aptitude testing or a vocational evaluation. Your RC will assist you with vocational exploration (we have information on virtually every occupation in the labor market) and counsel you to arrive at a realistic vocational objective. We will oversee the services that you receive and may also provide you with placement assistance.

Again, part of your responsibility includes following through on requests and recommendations from your RC. You may be asked to obtain information, schedule yourself for a test date, participate in vocational exploration, follow our guidelines for training and basically do what it takes to make your rehab services a positive experience. If you want an appointment, want to discuss a matter, or are following up on whether we received information pertaining to your case, **don't wait for your Coordinator to contact you**. If you place a call, allow several days for the call to be returned (remember Coordinators serve more than one district office so they may not receive your call immediately).

IMPORTANT!!!!!!

If we find you eligible for a service that needs to be funded, you will be asked to sign a written rehab plan and we will send authorization to the vendor stating what we will pay. **However, under no circumstances are you allowed to begin any training without a written, approved plan and authorization in place. We do not reimburse for plans that you start without a rehabilitation plan.**

While in training, we have regulations, policies and auditing requirements that we must adhere to. You too, must comply with these regulations, policies and auditing requirements. These include but are not limited to: attendance, grades, changes of objective, leaves during training, purchases of equipment, etc.

Periodically you will receive requests for feedback on your program and how you are planning for your eventual return to work. We ask that you give these requests appropriate attention.

Unfortunately, we know that we can't satisfy everyone who applies for services. However, in most cases, the program can certainly benefit you. You need to take responsibility for your future, so please help us to make this program work for you.

Please read on....

PROGRAM BASICS



Who we are:

Workers' Rehabilitation Services was established by an act of the Legislature in 1967. The primary purpose of the Rehab program has been to assist clients in a return to gainful employment in the most timely and cost effective manner possible while taking into account the needs of the individual.

We are governed by statutes set forth in Chapter 568 of the General Statutes. Rehabilitation regulations are covered under Section 31-283a-1 through Section 31-283a-6.

Over the years, we've guided thousands of workers back to gainful employment and financial independence. Our staff is currently comprised of 4 full-time Rehabilitation Coordinators (RCs) and one Supervisor, each of whom has a master's degree in a related field and at least 15 years of case management experience in vocational rehabilitation counseling.



WHO may be eligible for services:

1. Any injured worker who has a documented compensable injury or an approved stipulated claim **and**
2. for whom we are able to medically document that there are permanent limitations that preclude return to their previous work **and**
3. whose employer of record has no permanent, appropriate light duty work available.



WHAT we provide:

We consider our clients to be co-managers in the rehabilitation process. This means that you will be working closely with your Rehab Coordinator (RC). Together you will proceed through the services that are appropriate to your particular needs. We will be providing you with lots of labor market information and will request you do research on occupations as well. The importance of thoroughly researching your intended objective cannot be understated!!



What services we may offer:

- * Advocacy on behalf of client for return to work with their employer at the time of injury
- * Vocational Evaluation
- * Aptitude Testing
- * Vocational Counseling
- * Formal Training
- * On-the-Job Training
- * Job Seeking Skills/Placement Assistance



HOW the program works:

- *We begin by meeting a new client for an **initial interview**. At this time, we collect relevant information regarding your injury, including work history, medical issues, education, employment barriers and your thoughts on your future.

- *We then document your **eligibility for services** (see previous page)

- *While that is happening, you will probably be requested to take either an **Aptitude Test** and/or a **Vocational Evaluation**. The Aptitude test may take place at the Job Service (CT Works) closest to your home or in our district office. The purpose of the testing is to determine educational strengths and limitations. You may also take a Vocational Interest Inventory and a Work Values Assessment. You will receive additional information on the testing process prior to taking the test/inventory.

- *A Vocational Evaluation is generally completed at a facility close to your home or possibly in our district office. The length of an evaluation can range from one to ten days depending on the information requested. It may include an assessment of your aptitudes, interests, and physical capacity for gainful employment per WRS guidelines. Your RC can explain the process in greater detail.

- *When the Aptitude Test or the Vocational Evaluation is completed and a report is generated, your RC will set an appointment to review the results. Together you and your and the RC will work out an appropriate vocational strategy.



***Vocational counseling**

provides the opportunity for you and your RC to discuss and research occupational choices that you would like to consider, visit schools (if appropriate), obtain labor market information, and consider how any employment barriers may be addressed.



***If formal schooling**

is appropriate, a general guideline is that training may last up to a maximum of 2 years for full-time study (longer if you are completing on a part-time basis) though most clients seem to find training in the 6 mos. to 1 year range most desirable. In most cases training will take place in an accredited proprietary school, a community college, or a state college. We will pay for required costs of training including tuition, fees, books and required supplies.



***If on-the-job training (OJT)**

is appropriate, we will provide you with the information needed to approach a prospective employer in an informed manner. The time period for on the job training can vary from a few weeks to a year or more. We negotiate a contract with an employer and pay a fee based on the starting salary with that employer.



***Job-Seeking Skills (JSS)**

are available to all eligible clients. This service may be provided by your RC or may be contracted out. JSS includes:

- *Planning a job search
- *Completing job applications
- *Networking
- *Addressing questions related to your injury
- *Resume writing
- *Job Interviewing
- *Follow-up (i.e. Thank-you notes)



***Placement assistance**

may also be provided, if appropriate. This service is normally contracted out. *No one* can make a guarantee of placement. Every attempt is made to secure employment according to the vocational objective that you and your RC have decided upon.

All clients in a training program are **monitored** on a monthly basis for attendance and progress during training or placement services.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT REHAB



Doesn't the fact that I got hurt on the job entitle me to rehab services?

No, and even a Commissioner cannot "make you eligible" for rehab, though he/she may certainly refer you to the program. In order to receive services, you need to meet certain criteria for eligibility. That means we need to document information about the compensability of your workers' comp claim, permanent work restrictions, and your work status with your employer at the time of your injury.

What kinds of jobs do you have?

We do not have jobs. Our program is designed to help you get the **skills** you need to return to the job market in a physically appropriate occupation that is also, hopefully, suited to your abilities, interests and work values.

What can I be trained for?

Training is very individualized. Arriving at a goal is a process between you and your Rehab Coordinator (RC). In general, you are allowed a maximum of 2 years of training, but you are allowed only one program, not several that cumulatively equal 2 years. Most clients choose a training program that lasts anywhere from 6 mos to 1 year. The important thing is that you get into a program that is marketable and is appropriate for your abilities, interests and physical limitations. For some clients schooling is not a good match and in this case we may suggest considering on-the-job training (OJT) or assist with direct job placement.



Are you going to guarantee that I can get into something that will make the same money that I did when I got hurt?

We cannot make any guarantee that training will be available that will replace your income. There are many factors to be considered in finding an appropriate training option. These may include: educational background required, physical appropriateness, future job opportunities, length of training, economic considerations, travel, etc. You also need to keep in mind that if you are considering a field that is not related to your previous work experiences, you will be starting as a new employee...and new employees don't start at the top of the pay scale.



How long does all this take?

There is no fixed allotment of time for rehab services. We first need to establish your eligibility for services. We also do an assessment of your aptitudes, interests, needs, skills, physical capacity and such. You are expected to participate in vocational exploration that may include attending workshops, researching occupations, wages and employment outlook on the internet, visiting schools, talking to people in an occupation of interest. We also may need to consider any barriers you may have: childcare/transportation/no high school diploma/GED/language/convictions/pain/finances, etc. For some clients this can all be accomplished within several months, for others the time is quite a bit longer.



What will I do for money while I am in training?

WRS pays for **required** costs of training. This includes tuition, fees, books and other necessities that may be required, depending on your training program. Your RC will discuss this with you. We do not pay for consumable supplies such as notebooks, pens and pencils. We do not buy equipment such as computers or drafting boards or cameras. We also cannot assist you with living allowance or travel expenses. We **recommend that you come to us as early as possible after your injury**. Getting to us early will give you a better chance that your workers' comp benefits will be available during *at least* some of your training. In some cases, you may qualify for unemployment benefits. However, you need to know that **comp benefits are not extended simply because you are going through a rehabilitation training program**. Get involved as early as possible...

What if I have to leave school in the middle of training?

WRS recognizes that certain factors may come into play that are **unavoidable or serious** enough to affect your completion of training...such as surgery or an illness for which your doctor prescribes a leave of absence from school. Certain family issues may also necessitate a withdrawal. If such a situation should arise, your RC will send you a letter outlining the procedure you need to follow so that you may return to school. Generally, only 1 leave will be considered. Deciding you do not like your

choice of training is NOT an appropriate reason to withdraw from training. You will have every opportunity to research occupations until you are comfortable with your choice. We have a limited budget and therefore cannot use training as an exploration activity.

Who helps me get a job when I finish training?

It is important to remember that no one can force an employer to hire you...so no one can "get you a job". The only person who can help you land a job is YOU! Generally, both the training facility and WRS have resources to assist you in your job search. It is important that you learn how to approach an employer regarding your injury so as not to jeopardize your potential for getting hired. If you approach your job search from a negative point of view (e.g. telling the employer everything you CAN'T do because of your workers' comp injury) you will have successfully sabotaged yourself and shouldn't expect much success in your job search. The employer has to want to hire YOU and only YOU can make that happen!

IF YOU HAVE HAD A WORKERS' COMP INJURY AND ARE NOT ABLE TO RETURN TO YOUR USUAL WORK, PARTICIPATING IN WORKERS' REHAB MAY BE THE MOST IMPORTANT FIRST STEP YOU MAKE IN GETTING YOUR LIFE BACK ON TRACK!

