

ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE WORKERS' COMPENSATION PROGRAM



Every workplace should have a workers' compensation program. Effective programs help employers to:

- Provide safe and healthy work for employees
- Ensure that hazards are identified and eliminated to the greatest extent possible
- Provide initial and ongoing communication to employees about their rights and responsibilities
- Promote early return to work of injured employees when appropriate.

An effective program includes the following elements:

Give Workers Adequate Information

- All required state notices are posted in a noticeable location, including general information about workers' compensation and information on where to get medical care.
- All employees receive training and written information about basic workers' compensation benefits and procedures.
- It is clear to employees how they should report an injury, and whom they should contact for information and assistance regarding workers' compensation.
- Forms for predesignation of doctors are provided to all employees, where applicable.

Encourage Prompt Reporting

- A system is in place that encourages employees to report injuries promptly without fear of reprisal.
- Incentive or bonus programs that discourage reporting are eliminated, or they are redesigned to reward early reporting and participation in efforts to identify and control workplace hazards.
- Claim forms are readily available when needed.
- Management is trained on how to provide and process claim forms promptly.



Make the Link to Prevention

- Injuries, illnesses, and “near misses” are investigated to identify and correct job hazards that contributed to the problem.
- Patterns in workers’ compensation claims are analyzed to help target prevention efforts.
- The workplace is surveyed periodically to identify hazards and action is taken to eliminate them.
- Employees are trained about potential workplace hazards, how to prevent injury, and how to participate in overall workplace prevention activities.

Support Injured Workers

- Injured employees receive prompt and effective medical treatment, including first aid, when needed.
- The employer chooses or recommends treating doctors who are knowledgeable about work-related injuries and illnesses and who are respectful of employees.
- Managers and supervisors maintain contact with injured employees while they are recovering, and keep them informed about the progress of their claims.
- Injured employees are treated respectfully.

Promote Effective Return to Work

- The employer has a written policy describing the return-to-work process, including responsible persons and time frames.
- Staff responsible for the return-to-work program receive necessary training.
- Employees are encouraged to return to work as soon as is medically appropriate.
- Modified or alternative work is made available whenever possible.
- The employer identifies, in collaboration with employees and the union, specific jobs or tasks that can be done by injured employees with work restrictions, and provides this information to the treating physician.
- The treating physician makes recommendations for safe return to work based on the injured employee’s medical condition and the employer’s available jobs and working conditions.
- The employer, injured employee, and treating physician continue to work together to ensure that the employee is doing work that supports the recovery process.

Adapted from materials developed for The Worker Occupational Safety and Health Training and Education Program (WOSHTEP).