

Claims Investigations and the Role of VRCs/VSSs/ONCs

How does an investigator obtain a consultation with a worker's medical provider?

Claims investigations may result in obtaining evidence relevant to the medical condition or treatment of a worker. Investigators consulting with medical provider(s) about video surveillance or other investigative data may also influence the content and recommendations of the final investigative report.

An investigator should work with a field occupational nurse consultant (ONC) when a consultation is needed with a worker's medical provider. The ONC can help schedule and facilitate the conversation. This unbiased assistance is outlined in the field ONC position descriptions and requires an open investigation

Who is NOT the investigator's appropriate contact?

It is NOT appropriate for investigators to ask for similar assistance from:

- Internal vocational services specialists (VSSs), or
- VSS trainees, or
- External vocational rehabilitation counselors (VRCs) or interns, or
- Vocational professionals to obtain or provide them information about a worker's medical appointments.

Engaging in or assisting with an investigation does not align with the role of VSSs or VRCs in our workers' compensation system. More importantly, divulging information about the worker's medical appointment schedule, facilitating a conversation with the medical provider, or similar activities can violate their ethical requirements, putting the VSS or VRC credentials at risk. These credentials are required for the VSSs or VRCs to provide services to workers.

A VRC or intern may be interviewed as a service provider on the claim. The investigator should recognize these providers may have an ethical obligation to report the interview or their knowledge of an investigation to the worker.