



Initiatives to improve outcomes and reduce costs

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The mission of the Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) is to “Keep Washington Safe and Working.” The department has completed a number of transformational initiatives and continues to launch new projects aimed at improving results for customers and reducing overall costs. This fact sheet provides a brief description of some of these initiatives.

Helping injured workers heal and return to work: These initiatives are improving injured workers’ physical and financial health.

- **Stay at Work Program** - This program offers employers financial incentives for providing light-duty jobs to injured workers to keep them active and connected to the workforce, reducing long-term disability and related costs. More than 2,900 employers have participated since the program began in January 2012, keeping nearly 11,000 workers on the job. Once fully mature, the program is projected to save \$32 million annually.
- **New Approaches to Vocational Services** - L&I is engaging the vocational rehabilitation community to involve them earlier in claims and to standardize work processes. With the assistance of these professionals, we will be changing how they support injured workers, employers and medical providers in the first several months of a claim to significantly increase the likelihood of returning to work.
- **Early Return to Work Services** - L & I’s field office return to work staff, comprised of vocational service specialists, occupational nurse consultants, and occupational/physical therapists are developing standardized approaches to more effectively facilitate return to work.
- **Return to Work Pilots** - Several pilot projects are underway to provide job assistance services for injured workers, in partnership with WorkSource. These pilots have helped a number of injured workers return to work and are scheduled through 2015.
- **Medical Management Project** - This initiative became operational in 2014 and has increased the efficiency and effectiveness of L&I’s clinical resources by using its occupational nurse consultants at critical times in a claim.

Improving L&I’s workers’ compensation claims processes: L&I has implemented several Lean initiatives to streamline processes, find solutions, and improve customer service.

- **Claims Processor Services** - A claim processor was added to each of our claim units to relieve claim managers of day-to-day administrative tasks, allowing them to spend more time working with employers, injured workers, vocational and medical providers to ensure necessary return-to-work and other services are provided as quickly as needed.
- **Knowledge Management System** - This new online system, scheduled to go live in 2015, will give claims staff modern search capability and improved electronic access to resources such as policies, procedures and guidelines, freeing up time to help customers and reducing overall costs.

Improving medical care and serving providers: These initiatives improve treatment and health outcomes for injured workers, ultimately reducing costs associated with long-term disability.

- **Medical Provider Network** is a strong network of medical providers whose qualifications meet certain standards, similar to other health care insurers. In 2015, L&I will create a “top tier” of the network for providers who use certain occupational health best practices.
- **Centers for Occupational Health and Education (COHEs)** are organizations that provide training and organizational support to providers to increase their use of best practices in treating injured workers. COHEs support the piloting of new best practices and approaches to help injured workers heal, reducing the chance of long-term disability.

Opioid Guidelines - L&I implemented guidelines in July 2013 for doctors who prescribe narcotics, or opioid medication, to treat pain in injured workers. The guidelines ensure appropriate care for workers, supporting their return to work and saving lives. Since the guidelines were implemented, the share of injured workers with an opioid prescription 6-12 weeks from injury has declined by nearly 80%.

Safety Initiatives: At L&I, safety always comes first. L&I helps make sure workers go home from their jobs safe by helping employees and businesses understand how they can reduce workplace injuries and make everyone safer. Fewer injuries reduce workers’ compensation costs and improve productivity.

- **Logger Safety Initiative** - This initiative, implemented in 2014, is a partnership between L&I, private landowners, logging companies and others. It aims to reduce injuries and costs in the logging industry. The initiative focuses on establishing standards and incentives for participating employers, with the goal of creating a culture of safety that is pervasive throughout the logging industry.
- **Safety and Health Investment Project (SHIP)** - The SHIP program awards grants for innovative ideas aimed at preventing accidents and helping injured workers return to work.
- **Prevention Initiative** - L&I will work with employers to explore new, innovative ways to prevent the leading causes of serious workplace injuries.

Making it easy to do business with L&I: Businesses, medical providers and workers should all find it easy to do business with the department. L&I is developing systems and processes that are easy to understand and designed from customers’ perspectives.

- **FileFast** - This online service allows injured workers and medical providers to file claims electronically rather than fax or mail them. Claims filed online or by phone arrive five days faster on average – and the information is more complete, requiring less follow-up. Speed and completeness are vital because a two-week delay early in a claim increases costs by 18 percent.
- **E-File** - Employers can now file their quarterly reports online at L&I’s QuickFile web site. Approximately 160,000 Washington businesses currently use the site.
- **E-Correspondence** - L&I now offers an online service that allows injured workers, employers and medical providers to receive and manage claims-related mail electronically. This eliminates the need to manually open and process large volumes of mail, which are primarily copies of letters and legal notices required by law.