

Closing a Referral

Processes and Requirements

TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES

Note: This information is intended for use by Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRCs).

The timely and accurate submission of vocational closing reports plays a critical role in supporting the overall claim process.

You can help to reduce delays when a worker is:

fully released or returns to the job of injury,

OR

has returned to work full time, in full capacity, or in a reasonably continuous/permanent job,

OR

has been determined able to work,

Use the following checklist to ensure the claim manager (CM) has all the needed information:

- Contact the CM (by phone and in writing if there is a full release or a return to work).
- Send the closing report to the claim file.
- Verify the report is in the claim file for the CM to review.
- Enter the recommended outcome code.

Do this every time, and as soon as possible.

In rare cases, the claim manager may ask the vocational rehabilitation counselor (VRC) to keep the referral open for a short period of time. For example, an attending provider may release a worker to a trial return to work at their job of injury. In this case, the claim manager may want the VRC to monitor for a short period of time to ensure the return to work is successful.

Keeping the referral open is the claim manager's decision and should be a rare occurrence.

The claim manager can't take action to close the claim until the vocational referral is closed and the closing report is in the file. Final disability awards cannot be paid until the claim has been closed. Leaving the referral open unnecessarily can cause delays that can result in significant financial hardship for the worker.

If a worker would benefit from continued assistance with job searching or access to community resources, consider referring the worker to **L&I at WorkSource**.

To connect with your regional L&I at WorkSource vocational services specialist (VSS), send an **email to the L&I at WorkSource team**. Include the worker's name, claim ID, phone number, and any additional information.

In summary:

- Timely submission of the closing report to the claim file is critical.
- Close the referral as soon as you can after the worker returns to work or is found able to work.
- The claim manager makes the decision on whether to continue vocational services. See Washington Administrative Code [\(WAC\) 296-19A-020](#).

If you have questions, email the [Vocational Recovery Project](#).