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Beyond Borders: Delivering Worker-Centric Vocational Services to Out-of-State and Out-of-Country Workers

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Panel Members

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Learning Objectives:

- The role of the VRC on any claim outside of Washington is much more involved than an in state claim. It's important to take a proactive approach to these claims.
- Learn what a VRC should do when a worker relocates.
- Become familiar with common payment, communication, and medical delays that a VRC can assist with on these claims.
- Understand who VRCs can collaborate with to move claims forward and which claim units are designated for out-of-state and out-of-country claims.

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What changed in 2024?

In an effort to provide more worker-centric vocational services to all workers, L&I's Out of State – Out of Country referral hub went live on May 1, 2024.

This change has allowed more firms for the out of state/out of country referral hub to receive out of state and out of country referrals.

This gives workers access to more Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRCs) to workers who have moved outside of Washington.

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Moving the referral

Once you are notified that a worker is moving outside of Washington, discuss with your firm manager whether you or someone else in your firm will continue providing vocational services to the worker. If you do not provide vocational services to out-of-state or out-of-country workers talk to your firm manager about when to close the referral ADM3 (worker moves out of geographic area of VRC).

Before closing the referral ADM3:

- Ensure the progress reports document the services provided up until the closure of the referral.
- Verify that any documents completed during the course of the referral are in the file, such as the job of injury job analysis, work history forms and any transferable skills job analyses.
- Notify the worker a new VRC will be assigned.

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What is different for VRCs on out of country & out of state claims? The need to be even more proactive. The VRC will need to:

- Communicate with the Claim Manager frequently.
- Help a worker identify a provider or providers.
- Explain their role in the claim process to potential providers and assist in the coordination of care.
- Assist providers through the L&I provider application process.
- Answer more questions about what providers can bill for, the authorization process and timelines for bill payment.
- Work with the Claim Manager regarding worker travel needs for appointments, consultations or Independent Medical Exams (IMEs).

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How to help when you learn a worker is moving…

- Once the worker has their new address, send an EVOC with the updated address to the Claim Manager (CM) AND follow up with a call to the CM. Ask the worker to submit their completed Change of Address Form to the file, as soon as possible.
- If the worker is not already using the Claim and Account Center, suggest they sign up and offer to help them through the process.
- Encourage the worker to see their current attending physician before moving to get an updated treatment plan. Complete any necessary diagnostics and obtain a CD of any x-rays, MRIs, CT scans and chart notes. Ask the worker if you can attend the appointment with them.
- Help your worker complete the Payment Method Authorization Form, which will allow them to receive time-loss or loss of earning power benefits via direct deposit or debit card, instead of receiving a paper check.
- Utilize the Find a Doctor tool on L&I's website to help the worker begin the process of finding a provider in their new area. There are separate lists for providers in Mexico, Canada and Jamaica.

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Help with medical delays for your worker:

- Fewer providers are available outside of Washington.
- Providers outside of Washington are not familiar with the L&I process, policies and Washington workers compensation Laws .
- Medical providers are not required to accept anyone as a new patient. They may decline to see a worker.
- Help both providers and facilities understand both the individual provider and facility must have L&I provider numbers.
- Be involved in the referral process to avoid having a worker sent to a provider that is not in the L&I Network and to provide a synopsis of medical treatment for the claim, as well as diagnostic reports and imaging completed.

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Help explain payment delays to your worker

Once a worker moves it can take a very long time for a debit card to be sent via FedEx for receipt of time-loss or loss of earning power benefits.

The reimbursement process will take longer. Reimbursements cannot be issued to the debit card or via direct deposit.

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Help prevent communication delays

- Determine how you will contact the worker once they move. Communication may be a significant barrier if the worker lives in a more rural area with limited cell phone or Internet services.
- It's important to understand that workers may elect legal representation. If their attorney is not familiar with Washington workers compensation Laws, they may be confused or provide information that is specific to their local area.
- Work with the provider to determine how best to communicate with them.
- Watch for letters of authorization in the claim file and send a copy of the letter to the provider.

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What resources exist where the worker relocated?

Resources differ greatly amongst the different states and countries. It is unlikely that a VRC providing out of state services lives in the same area as the worker. It is the responsibility of the VRC to familiarize themselves with the worker's local area.

- What services are available?
- Are there any large medical networks already working with L&I or interested in becoming providers?
- Are there providers on Find A Doc that are accepting new L&I patients?

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Help the worker and the provider with billing or reimbursement requests.

Expect to have a higher level engagement with providers on out-of-state and out-of-country claims because:

- Providers outside of Washington may not know what services are billable
- Washington and other states may use unique billing codes that are specific to their area. They may need to use other codes in order to get paid.
- L&I cannot enforce laws protecting workers from being billed for claim-related medical services outside of Washington state.

Electronic Billing

- For out-of-state providers electronic billing can greatly reduce the amount of time it takes for the provider to receive payment. They can also correct any billing errors much faster through the electronic billing system.
- **Most foreign providers do not have access to bill electronically.**
- Chart notes and billing should be submitted together to prevent delays in processing.
- For foreign provider billing concerns, advise the provider to contact the Claim Manager.

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Out of State Claims – Unit 7

- Travel authorization can be considered for ongoing medical treatment, diagnostics, testing.
- CM needs information to authorize medically necessary care to help the worker heal and return to work. Medical providers can submit other state's forms, if necessary. It is always preferred that they complete L&I forms such as the Activity Prescription Form (APF).
- A Nurse Case Manager may be able to help find a new Attending Provider, but keep in mind they are not familiar with L&I's system and you many need to explain the process to the provider.
- Each state has their own agency equivalent to Washington's WorkSource. Explore their offerings and other community resources that may benefit the worker.
- The Claim Manager may be able to assist in obtaining other state's employment records.

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Medical Tips for how you can help

1. Utilize the Find a Doctor tool on L&I's website to help the worker begin the process of finding a provider in their new area. There are separate lists for providers in Mexico, Canada and Jamaica.
2. If the claim feels stuck due to medical, contact the Claim Manager about whether the worker can travel for treatment.
3. Maximize the trip! Does the worker need additional diagnostics? Can you arrange an in person vocational meeting? Is vocational testing needed?
4. Think outside of the box. If the worker cannot travel back to Washington consider where else the worker may be able to travel to get treatment?
5. You may need to help get chart notes and provide them to various providers as part of the process of assisting in the coordination of care.
6. If in person treatment is not possible, contact the Claim Manager to discuss whether treatment via telehealth may be authorized.
7. You may need to help the provider understand which services require prior authorization, which services must be submitted for Comagine review and how to submit a request for Comagine review.

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Out of Country (Not Mexico) – Unit 7

- Contact the Claim Manager to discuss the documentation necessary for worker reimbursement for treatment. Work with L&I's Foreign Provider Liaison if the provider is willing to go through the application process.
- If chart notes or bills are received in a language other than English, they will need to first go through the translation process before they can be addressed by the Claim Manager and this will take time.
- Procedures and diagnostics which require Comagine review will still need to go through that process in order to be authorized and eligible for reimbursement.
- Claim Managers manually process bills for claims outside of the United States. This is very involved and takes much longer. Please be patient and reach out with any questions.
- Providers outside of the US and Mexico are not able to be paid via debit card

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Out of Country – Mexico Claims – Unit U

Mexico Medical Coordinator– Dr. Castro

- Dr. Castro contracts with L&I to assist workers in Mexico to establish care with an attending provider and receive medically necessary treatment. He helps providers in Mexico start the process of becoming L&I providers and works directly with the agency's Foreign Provider Liaison, Claudia Watson.

- Notify the Claim Manager right away of a worker's impending move to Mexico and they will take the necessary steps to contact Dr. Castro.

Foreign Provider Liaison – Claudia Watson

- Contact the Claim Manager directly regarding billing concerns for providers in Mexico. They will reach out to L&I's Provider Liaison to offer direct assistance to that provider.

Electronic Benefit Payment System (EBPS) for time-loss and Loss of Earning Power benefits can be issued, if the worker is eligible.

Providers in Mexico can receive electronic payment to a debit card. Many banks in Mexico will not cash L&I Warrants, so this ensures the provider is paid for their services.

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Resources on the L&I website

- Schedule a return call with Provider Hotline
- Email Address for new upcoming providers LNIProviderOne@Lni.wa.gov
- Comagine for providers (800) 541-2894
- Address for bills and adjustments :

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  PO Box 44269

  Olympia, WA 98504-4269
- Phone Number for Providers in Mexico (888) 814-4936

- Guide to Working With Out-of-State and Out-of-Country Workers
- Fee Schedule and Payment Policies (MARFS)
- Vocational Recovery Reference Manual
- Out of State/ Out of Country Referral Hub FAQs
- Find a Doctor (wa.gov)
- Medical Provider Network Status Tool
- Forms & Publications Search (for L&I documents in Spanish)

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Thank you to the following subject matter experts who contributed to this webinar:

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