

Outpatient Services Referral Guide for Physical and Occupational Therapists



This guide identifies best practices for attending providers to create a smooth referral, and optimize services for improved worker outcomes. Treatment covered under workers' compensation benefits focuses on the patient's functional abilities, and emphasizes active care and self-reliance.

Look for these key pieces in your referral from an attending provider and, if needed, contact them for more information:

- Clearly defined reason for the referral: conservative care for musculoskeletal injury, post-surgical rehabilitation, intensive work rehabilitation, etc.
- Defined goals for therapy based on the top 3–5 return-to-work activities the patient needs to focus on as detailed in the Activity Prescription Form at [Lni.wa.gov/ActivityRx](https://lmi.wa.gov/ActivityRx).
- Interventions that have already been used for this episode: Current home exercise program, prior physical therapy/occupational therapy visits, activity logs, manual therapy interventions, medications/injections.
- Progress and impacts the interventions have had to date. Note any positive or negative outcomes from prior interventions: Flare-ups with particular exercises, activity avoidant behaviors, range of motion and strength gains resulting in functional improvement.
- Important comorbidities or complicating factors.
- Current work status (full duty, modified/light duty, not working, no job to return to).
- Communication preference for progression and achievement of functional improvement goals, or barriers. Best practice is to communicate these via Physical Medicine Progress Report at [Lni.wa.gov/go/F245-453-000](https://lmi.wa.gov/go/F245-453-000).

Critical data you need about the claim:

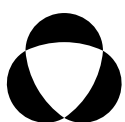
- Worker's information: Name and date of birth.
- Attending provider information: Name and phone/fax numbers.
- Claim information: claim number, date of injury, claim manager's contact information, accepted condition/ICD 10 diagnosis.

Important documents to obtain:

- Activity Prescription Form at [Lni.wa.gov/ActivityRx](https://lmi.wa.gov/ActivityRx)
- Most recent medical chart note
- Applicable job analysis or job description (e.g. off work, complex situation, entry into a Work Rehabilitation program)

Consider the most appropriate services to meet the worker's job goals when receiving a referral:

Standard Outpatient Therapy at [Lni.wa.gov/TherapyResources](https://lmi.wa.gov/TherapyResources): These services are provided by occupational therapists and physical therapists for injuries in the first two months or during post-surgical recovery. The clinical focus is on symptom management and home exercise program progression. Typical therapies include supervised exercise, home exercise program creation, manual therapy, and therapeutic modalities.



Work Rehabilitation at [Lni.wa.gov/patient-care/treating-patients/helping-workers-get-back-to-work/work-rehabilitation-2024](https://lni.wa.gov/patient-care/treating-patients/helping-workers-get-back-to-work/work-rehabilitation-2024): These services are delivered only by clinics that are enrolled in L&I's Work Rehabilitation program. Typical services are for workers who require additional exertional or durational needs and are achieved by exercise and work simulation tasks. Workers must be capable of participating in full body programs and have no medical contraindications. Goals are based on the job analysis or job descriptions and address Activity Prescription Form-limited activities to enhance return to work. Work rehabilitation is divided into two special programs based on intensity and need.

Work rehabilitation-conditioning is intended for workers who have:

- Sedentary to medium physical job demands.
- Durational exertion needs from one to four hours per day.
- The ability to benefit from care 3–5 times per week based on their individual needs.
- Few psychosocial barriers and low-level fear avoidance, catastrophization, or pain behavior that is manageable within the program.
- Higher-level psychosocial factors or higher claim age may require additional consultation with behavioral health support or activity coaching.

Work rehabilitation-hardening is intended for workers who have:

- Medium to very heavy physical job demands.
- Durational exertion in excess of four hours per day.
- The ability to benefit from care 3–5 times per week based on their individual needs.
- Jobs requiring greater task simulation and longer task performance.
- Significant psychosocial barriers, catastrophization, moderate to high-level fear avoidance, or generalized pain behavior that is best managed with an integrated approach.