

Option 2: What You Need to Know

Vocational rehabilitation services for employees of self-insured businesses



Option 2 benefits changed in 2015. The information in this guide applies to workers whose vocational plans were approved on or after July 31, 2015.

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I selected Option 2; what happens now?

Labor & Industries (L&I) received your *Retraining Plan Selection Form* showing that you selected Option 2, instead of the Option 1 retraining plan.

Here's what happens next:

1. Your time-loss benefits end.
2. Your claim will be closed.
 - You have the right to apply to reopen your claim if your condition worsens later and the need for medical treatment is documented.
3. You will receive two benefits:
 - A vocational award.
 - A training fund.

About the vocational award

The Option 2 vocational award is money to help you transition from time-loss payments to potential employment, schooling, or other plans after your claim is closed.

How is the amount calculated and paid?

The award is equal to nine months of time-loss compensation, less any overpayments or Division of Child Support* liens you owe. This benefit is paid bi-weekly.

Can I receive the balance of my award in one lump-sum payment?

You may request a lump-sum payment of your remaining award balance by mailing a letter to L&I.

- You can request a lump-sum at any time.
- L&I may approve or deny your request.
- If L&I approves the lump-sum, your self-insured employer will send your payment once 70 days or more have passed from the mailing date on your claim-closing order.

- Because bi-weekly payments will have already begun, your employer will send the remainder of your payment in a lump-sum.

Mail your request to:

Department of Labor & Industries
Self-Insurance Section
PO Box 44892
Olympia WA 98504-4892

About the training fund

Training funds are available for you to use toward the cost of a self-directed training plan. The time period and amount of funds you can use for training are listed on your Option 2 *Notice of Decision*.

You have up to five years from the date Option 2 benefits are approved to use the training funds. The school or training program you choose must be either:

- A licensed or accredited school or training program.
- An L&I approved school or training program.

What costs can be paid with the training funds?

You can seek training through any licensed, accredited or L&I-approved program or course.

You can choose training that is different from the plan you submitted to L&I for approval.

You can use your training funds on the following expenses:

- Tuition or training fees for approved programs or courses.
- Books, fees, supplies, equipment and tools required for the program or course.
- Licensed childcare or dependent care while attending approved programs or courses.
- Up to 10 percent of the training fund for vocational counseling and/or job placement services.

How do I make sure my school is approved?

The school or training program you attend must have an L&I provider number before we will approve your training.

* Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Division of Child Support

Ask your school or training program if they have an L&I provider number, or contact the Provider Hotline at 1-800-848-0811 to find out.

If the school or training program wants to become an approved L&I provider, or if they have questions about this process, they can contact the Provider Hotline at 1-800-848-0811.

What costs can't be paid with the training funds?

Expenses not paid for by the training fund include:

- Transportation, including parking.
- Lodging.
- On-the-job training.
- Costs related to starting your own business.
- Any program or course not approved by L&I.
- Unlicensed childcare or dependent care.
- Licensed childcare or dependent care while you are not attending training.

How do I access my training funds?

Once you have chosen a school or training program, you must apply through your employer (or its third party claims administrator) to access your training funds.

It is important to contact your employer early in this process, so they can tell you how to apply.

Your employer will likely need to know:

- What school or program you plan to attend.
- Anticipated costs (itemized) of your training program. For examples, see the "What costs can be paid with the training funds?" section in this document.

Getting help with vocational counseling and job placement services

You can use part of your training fund to get help from a vocational provider with services such as:

- Assistance in developing a training plan.

- Job development, including contacting potential employers on your behalf.
- Job readiness and interview practice.
- Job search and job application assistance, including targeted resume development.

How much of my training fund can I use for vocational services?

You can spend up to 10 percent of the maximum training fund (listed on your Option 2 *Notice of Decision*) on vocational counseling or job placement services, or both.

Training funds are used in order of bills received, so you'll need to keep a record of your Option 2 expenses to ensure you have enough funds to pay for vocational services.

If you have questions about your expenses or the amount left in your fund, call your employer or its third party claims administrator.

How do I find a provider?

You can use the vocational provider you worked with previously or contact L&I's Option 2 specialist at 360-902-9135 for a list of vocational providers in your area.

You may switch to a different qualified vocational provider at any time as long as you have enough of the Option 2 vocational services funds left.

What happens after choosing a provider?

Your vocational provider will work with you to create a service agreement focused on your goals and listing your respective responsibilities. If you agree, you'll be asked to sign it.

After each visit with your vocational provider, you'll be asked to sign the provider's summary report, verifying you received the services reported.

The provider may want to review your claim documents to ensure you receive the best service possible. If you choose to share this information, you will need to send a written request to your employer or its third party claims administrator asking for a copy of your claim documents.

About the billing process

All bills must be submitted within one year from the date of service or expense. If the bills are not submitted within one year, they cannot be paid.

Direct billing

Most bills should be sent directly to your employer. Your employer will need to tell the training provider(s) how to submit bills.

Reimbursements

If you pay for approved expenses out-of-pocket, you may submit your receipts to your employer for a refund on authorized expenses. You must submit your request for reimbursements within one year from the date of service or expense.

Be sure to check with your employer for instructions on how to request reimbursements.

What if I don't receive my reimbursement?

Contact your self-insured employer (or its third party claims administrator) directly if you do not receive payment or notification within ninety (90) days of submitting your request.

What happens if I decide to choose Option 2 after starting Option 1 retraining?

If you started your Option 1 retraining plan before selecting Option 2, then:

- Your vocational award will be reduced by any time-loss received since the beginning of your Option 1 retraining plan.
- Your Option 2 training fund will be reduced by the amount expended for Option 1.

You are responsible for:

- Keeping track of all training expenditures to make sure you don't spend more money than allowed for your vocational Option 2 training fund.
- Paying all training expenses that exceed your vocational Option 2 training fund balance.

Who can I contact for help?

For questions about:

- Accessing your training funds
- Billing process
- Reimbursements

Contact your employer or its third party claims administrator.

To find out if a school or training program has been approved by L&I

- Option 2 Helpline: 360-902-9135
- Provider Hotline: 1-800-848-0811

To get a list of qualified vocational providers — for vocational counseling or job placement services

Option 2 Helpline: 360-902-9135

If you're unable to resolve an issue with your employer

Department of Labor & Industries
Self-Insurance Section

PO Box 44892

Olympia, WA 98504-4892

360-902-6901

or

Office of the Ombuds for Injured Workers
of Self-Insured Businesses

PO Box 44001

Olympia WA 98504-4001

1-888-317-0493 (toll-free)

Upon request, foreign language support and formats for persons with disabilities are available. Call 1-800-547-8367. TDD users, call 711. L&I is an equal opportunity employer.

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