

## **Early & Safe Return to Work (ESRTW) Strategies**

### **Early Intervention:**

- System Functionality has been implemented that captures key data from the initial injury reporting forms to identify claims for simultaneous routing from Claims Registration to an appropriate claim owner for early intervention. The claims are distributed to an Intake Adjudicator as the primary owner with a secondary assignment to a Case Manager. A system generated task “Review for Early intervention” is sent to the Case Manager and the ESRTW Facilitator at the time of the early intervention referral. This functionality creates more opportunity for staff to intervene earlier on claims and communicate earlier with workers and employers about the ESRTW process

### **ESRTW Facilitators:**

- The Commission’s ESRTW Facilitators facilitate the ESRTW process by educating workers and employers on their legislated ESRTW roles & responsibilities. In addition, the facilitators assist the workplace parties in the development of safe and suitable return to work plans and identify practical solutions where the workplace parties are experiencing barriers or difficulties that impeded the ESRTW process.

### **Return to Work Program Coordinator:**

- The Return to Work Program Coordinator is responsible for the promotion of best practices in disability management and return to work by providing analysis, consultative program development, educational and program auditing services to employers throughout Newfoundland & Labrador. These functions involve timely response to requests from workplace parties to assist in the development and implementation of a return to work program or to analyze an existing return to improve the program with a view to identifying program gaps and recommending steps to improve the program. Sessions with employers include an assessment of the employer’s knowledge of ESRTW and discussion around the responsibilities and benefits of an effective ESRTW process. The Coordinator also identifies employers who may benefit from the National Institute of Disability Management and Research (NIDMAR) Workplace Disability Management Assessment (WDMA) and are certified by NIDMAR to conduct these assessments.

### **Physician Resource & Education Program (PREP)**

- Through the Commission’s Physician Resource & Education Program, a Commission physician and claims management staff provide education sessions to physicians across the province on the significance of ESRTW. Sessions have also been conducted with family practice residents from Memorial University, new immigrant physicians and the College of Physicians and Surgeons. Ongoing assistance is also provided to physicians who require assistance in completing forms and documentation that impact the ESRTW process.

### **ESRTW Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):**

- Specific early intervention measures and enhanced KPI and management reporting were implemented in 2013. The early intervention reports capture the number and % of claims where case managers initiated contact with workers within the Commission's 48 hour standard, and where ESRTW responsibilities were discussed with the worker. *Performance Target: 80%.*
- The Commission has also adopted a KPI that tracks return to work outcomes following the successful completion of an ESRTW program. *Performance Target: 95%.* A sustainable return to work outcome is an outcome where a worker did not have subsequent activity (ESRTW, Temporary Earnings Loss or Labour Market Re-entry) on the same claim following claim closure.

### **Quality Assurance Framework:**

- Through the roll out of the Commission's quality assurance framework in 2015, the QA Team will provide increased oversight of the proper application of ESRTW KPIs and other critical elements of the Commission's claims management model that directly impact the success of the ESRTW program. The QA framework will allow for the monitoring and reporting on performance results in relation to established ESRTW KPIs, and the delivery of the ESRTW program, including the identification of performance gaps and recommend practical solutions that can be implemented toward improvement.

### **Team Reviews:**

- The team review concept is based on the adage that "two heads are better than one". It is critical for all appropriate expertise to be brought together to review and assist in the development of case plans on claims where impediments to recovery and return to work are identified. The core members involved in team reviews consist of case manager, team lead, medical consultant and occupational rehabilitation consultant. Other resources are included in the team review based on the circumstances of the case including physiotherapy consultant, chiropractic consultant, ESRTW facilitator, the family physician and others that may be identified. The team review is flagged at 6 weeks or could be initiated where there is an unclear diagnosis and/or no treatment plan.

### **Enhanced ESRTW KPI & management reporting:**

- Comprehensive system reporting has been implemented that provides data on performance in relation to established ESRTW KPIs and other aspects of the overall claims management process that impact the success of ESRTW. Data is provided at the manager, team lead and individual case manager level so all involved in the management of claims can easily identify performance strengths and areas requiring improvement in comparison to their counterparts. The data is provided through monthly dashboard and quarterly reports to allow for quarterly and yearly performance comparisons.

### **Revised ESRTW Plan form & enhanced online functionality:**

A revised ESRTW plan form and enhanced online capability was implemented with the following features:

- The capability for employers to build on data collected from previously submitted plans to submit a new plan.
- A field to indicate *hours types* in the return-to-work schedules.
- A new calendar view of ESRTW schedules for employers and case managers.
- A comparison tool for employers and case managers to compare current and previous plans.

Additional enhancements for staff who process the ESRTW plan and facilitate return to work with injured workers and employers include:

- Updated ESRTW plan and all fields, except free form text, will be data entered and the form classified to the claim.
- ESRTW paper plans attached to a paper form 7 will be scanned together and queued for data entry.
- Opening an ESRTW plan from the work center will launch the ESTRW folder.
- An updated ESRTW folder with new information and actions.
- Improved information collection related to worker participation in the ESRTW planning process.

### **Occupational Medicine Initiative with Memorial University:**

- Collaboration between the Dean of the MUN School of Medicine and staff from the Commission's Health Care Services department began in April, 2013. Since that time, work between the Commission and curriculum coordinators from the medical school has evolved, with staff from Health Care Services now providing student teaching sessions in both the Phase II and Phase III sections of the curriculum..

### **Implementation of Disability Management Guidelines:**

- A disability guideline is a collection of information about various medical diagnoses and conditions. Each topic includes information such as a clinical description, information on diagnosis and prognosis, treatment and rehabilitation options, disability durations, based on severity and job requirements and accommodations.
- Setting expectations with clients
- Will assist decision makers in the medical management of a claim and expedite ESRTW.
- Will not replace the weighing of evidence or be used as a decision making tool.
- Information can be provided to clients
- The guidelines will provide decision makers with specific information, facts and questions to help leverage health care provider support with objective reasons for time away from work
- Allow decision makers to partner with health care providers and build a stronger working relationship to assist with the injured workers recovery and ESRTW process.
- Reed Group