

Physician's guide to working with WCB

What is workers' compensation?

WCB-Alberta was created by government to administer the *Workers' Compensation Act* for the province's workers and employers.

We provide cost-effective disability and liability coverage for work-related injury and illness. This means we compensate workers for lost income and coordinate the health care and other services they need due to a work-related injury.

The system is entirely funded by employers to cover the costs of treatment and benefits for work-related injury and disability.

Workers' compensation benefits include:

- **Health care**—We cover all costs of medical aid required as a result of a workplace injury or illness, including hospitalization, medical care (including investigations and surgery), medication and all physician fees.
- **Rehabilitation**—Rehabilitation centres throughout the province help workers recover in a safe, multi-disciplinary program. Re-employment services assist injured workers to find alternate employment when their work restrictions prevent them from returning to their pre-accident work.
- **Wage replacement benefits**—These benefits are payable during periods of total disability where no work is medically advisable. They are based on 90 per cent of a worker's net earnings, subject to any maximum compensable earnings in effect at the date of accident.
- **Modified work**— Support for reintegration to the workplace is available through negotiated light duties, wage top-ups or subsidies, as needed. This includes other services or tools needed to help a worker stay job attached during their recovery.

Safe and timely return to work is important.

According to the Canadian Medical Association, "Prolonged absence from one's normal roles, including absence from the workplace, is detrimental to a person's mental, physical and social well-being. The treating physician should therefore encourage a patient's return to function and work as soon as possible after an illness or injury, provided that a return to work does not endanger the patient, their co-workers or society."^{*}

**Canadian Medical Association policy update 2013 — The treating physician's role in helping patients return to work after an illness or injury.*

A safe return to work means:

- **Independence**—The worker remains self-sufficient and is no longer dependent on others.
- **Self-worth**—Being seen as a valued employee and not simply an injured worker.
- **Income and job security**—The worker knows they have a job to return to and does not have to look for alternate employment.
- **A sense of belonging**—To their company and co-workers.

It's not easy to be off the job. We work with our partners, including physicians, to ensure injured workers get the best medical support, advice and treatment that will help them return to work that is safe and appropriate.

Your role

As a physician, you play a major role in the health and well-being of workers who are injured on the job by:

- **Providing timely and appropriate care.**
- **Reporting the injury and treatment online within 48 hours of treatment.** Maintaining regular reporting ensures we're up-to-date on your patient's progress and benefit needs. It also helps us with return-to-work planning.
- **Keeping your patient informed and educating them on the role they can play in their recovery.** It is important for them to understand their injury and how they can return to work safely.
- **Accurate reporting.** Your reports will be used to assess your patient's claim and move it forward. It's important to report accurately:
 - What the worker tells you about how the accident happened.
 - Your observations and suggestions for recovery and return to work.
 - Their current complaints and any relevant past history or concurrent health conditions.

- Relevant objective findings (those present and those absent).
- Your diagnosis and diagnostic questions.
- Your suggestions for modified work conditions and readiness to participate.

Electronic injury reporting

Ensuring workers get timely access to appropriate benefits, treatment and other services is critical to maximize recovery and to minimize the impact of workplace injuries.

To achieve this shared goal, all Alberta physicians are required to submit reports through [Electronic Injury Reporting](#) (either online or through an electronic medical records vendor via batch submission). This ensures immediate report availability and expeditious payment of accounts.

Exemptions may be considered on an individual basis where one of the following applies:

- Inability to access electronic reporting as a result of lack of high-speed internet access in your geographic location.
- Working weekend locums or longer-term specialist locums as part of the AMA's Physician Locum Service (PLS).

What can we do for you?

- **Expedite specific medical services such as CT scans and MRIs.** We can provide expedited access to consultations and general orthopedic and spine, knee, shoulder, wrist and hand subspecialty surgery. Simply select the services you would like to request on your physician report.
- **Provide access to a WCB physician to discuss your patient's case** (e.g., barriers to recovery, opioid management, COVID-19). If you wish to discuss a case with a WCB medical consultant, tick that box in your report and you will be contacted within a few days.
- **Assist with billing inquiries for services provided to an injured worker.** Email Medical Aid at medical.aid@wcb.ab.ca or fax 780-498-7852.

Note: We cannot assist with emergency care (e.g., cauda equina, distal biceps ruptures). Please instruct your patient to seek immediate care at an appropriate hospital emergency department.

How to contact us

For more information about the services available for physicians, please contact our Health Care Strategy team at 780-498-3219.

