Working with Vocational Rehabilitation

NEW YORK STATE | Workers' Compensation Board

As legal advocates for injured workers, you play a key role in their rehabilitation and return-to-work efforts. At the New York State Workers' Compensation Board (Board), our Vocational Rehabilitation Services unit works with you and your client, as a team, to provide high-quality, individualized support. Our free services are available to any injured worker looking to explore options for returning to work or maintaining employment. For additional details, including a fact sheet, please visit our Vocational Rehabilitation Services webpage at **wcb.ny.gov/vocrehab**.

Our services for injured workers include:

- Career counseling, resume development, and mock interview preparation.
- Serving as a bridge between employers, training providers, and community partners.
- Sharing job leads and assisting with job search efforts.
- Providing vocational resources and referrals to enhance marketability.
- Timely and comprehensive vocational updates.
- Education regarding reasonable accommodations, light duty/modified work, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Our services do not include:

- Funding for training or referrals for physical therapy.
- Employability assessments or certification of labor market attachment (LMA).
- Testifying at hearings.
- Obtaining or sharing information from the New York State Department of Labor or the Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) without written consent from the injured worker.

CONTACT US
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VISIT US
wcb.ny.gov/vocrehab

Guidance for referrals and ongoing collaboration

To help us provide timely, effective, and well-aligned services, please keep the following in mind when making and managing referrals to the Board's Vocational Rehabilitation Services unit:

1. Clear purpose and communication

Referrals should include the WCB Case ID, injured worker's contact information, and the reason for the referral. Attorneys are encouraged to discuss referrals with their clients in advance. Sharing relevant contexts such as vocational goals, recent decisions, or a resume, will enable us to tailor services from the outset.

2. Appropriate timing

Referrals are most effective when the injured worker is medically stable and ready to participate (at or near maximum medical improvement). Early coordination helps align services with hearings, labor market attachment needs, and return-to-work planning.

3. Realistic expectations

Vocational rehabilitation is a process. Vocational rehabilitation counselors (VRCs) support job search efforts and barrier reduction, however, the Board does not guarantee employment or determine employability. Injured worker engagement is essential for progress.

4. Professional collaboration

Our VRCs are trained in return-to-work planning, labor market research, and disability-related employment issues. We welcome collaboration but request that we not be directed toward predetermined outcomes or timelines. All communication should remain respectful and professional to support fair and effective service delivery.

5. Labor market attachment (LMA)

Participation in vocational services may support LMA, but does not replace an active job search. Injured workers must remain engaged by submitting resumes, attending appointments, and adhering to recommendations. While VRCs do not certify LMA, they can provide job search reports and guidance about completing the ***Claimant's Record of Job Search Efforts/Contacts (Form C-258)*** with supporting documentation.

6. Individualized service planning

All services are customized based on variables such as medical status, functional capacity, work history, skills, goals, and regional labor market conditions, etc. Not all services are appropriate for every injured worker.

7. Coordinated resources

VRCs collaborate with State agencies, educational institutions, community organizations, licensed master social workers, and internal Board units to connect injured workers with employment-related resources and other support. It is important to respect existing relationships and avoid creating barriers to program access and service delivery for the injured worker.

8. ACCES-VR

ACCES-VR is a separate State agency within the New York State Education Department. It is an eligibility program whose mission is to assist individuals with permanent disabilities with securing employment. Temporarily disabled individuals are not eligible for ACCES-VR services. Injured workers applying to ACCES-VR must be reachable and able to participate in vocational activities, or risk being ineligible for the program. Injured workers who self-report they cannot work, or who lack interest in employment, may make a consumer-led decision to forgo services. Referring injured workers to the Board's Vocational Rehabilitation Services unit can help educate them about ACCES-VR services, eligibility criteria, or connect them to alternative programs for consideration.

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Thank you for your continued partnership and commitment to injured workers. We look forward to working together to support meaningful and successful return-to-work outcomes.

The New York State Workers' Compensation Board protects the rights of employees and employers by ensuring the proper delivery of benefits and by promoting compliance with the law. To learn more about the Board, visit **wcb.ny.gov**. Sign up for Board notifications at **wcb.ny.gov/Notify**.

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