

Welcome

Welcome to the first issue of The Rehab Review, Education Queensland's rehabilitation newsletter, for 2003. We hope you had a relaxing break over the Christmas and New Year period.

This year will see many new challenges and opportunities in the rehabilitation field and we hope you are all looking forward to another action packed year.

This edition of The Rehab Review is a special one as we have published our first article submitted by a Rehabilitation Consultant. A big thank you goes to Jan Arnold, Metro North CSU, for taking the time to provide us with some valuable information.

Early Worker Contact - by Jan Arnold

The role of the school-based Workplace Rehabilitation Coordinator (WPRC) is vital to the success of rehabilitation. International research and EQ experience confirm that an employee absent due to illness will feel like a valued employee if a positive, caring contact is made from their school/site in the first few days of absence.

It is important to recognise the significance of this contact. Such a contact should not be minimised and left to an Administrative Office to enquire only about leave and length of absence. It is the role of the WPRC. For some WPRCs, it will involve a conscious decision to 'put on another hat' and, if necessary, 'separate' from your usual position. However, if there is a role conflict, it is preferable to seek support from someone else in the school or District Office.



► Identify yourself as the WPRC, even if you are also the Deputy Principal, Registrar or HOD. 'I am calling in my role as the Rehab Coordinator...'

- Your goal is threefold:
 - To ensure the employee knows that he/she is a valued member of staff, who will be assisted (not pushed) back to work when medically appropriate. Start to develop a working relationship in your role.
 - To get specific information about the nature of the injury, the likely length of absence, a sense about the barriers to return to work and therefore, an idea about the need for a Graduated Return to Work Program. (NB This will be a point-in-time assessment, which may change over time.)
 - To give information about EQ's Rehabilitation Policy, which assists with early and safe return to work through the Graduated Return to Work Program.



WPRC role and early contact:

- Processes should be in place for you as WPRC, to be notified immediately of an employee who will be absent for more than 3-7 days.
- Do some homework first. Determine the potential need for future rehabilitation. Obviously a bad flu is not the same as stress, back injury or 'unknown - a medical condition'. If rehab is not needed (eg measles, flu), contact is optional. Review available paperwork; obtain leave balances.
- Telephone within 3 days.
- This is the Initial Contact which will usually precede the Initial Interview. The issues should be discussed in greater or lesser detail depending on the circumstances. Usually, most of the issues will need to be discussed in more detail during a later Initial Interview. Alternatively, it may be better to go into detail during this first contact if the Initial Interview will be delayed. Use your judgement.

► Ensure the following issues are covered during the conversation:

- How did the injury/illness occur? Encourage the employee to tell their story - it is therapeutic for them to do so. Your role is not to judge but to listen. You do not have to have an opinion. Nor do you have to have all the answers, but you can access resources, eg advice from Rehab Consultant or District Office.
- What is the nature of the injury/illness? What is the doctor saying about treatment, the length and ease of recovery? Determine the employee's likely need for rehab assistance. Mention the need for a Medical Authority Form to enable a partnership between the employee, their doctor and the WPRC.



- Explain the EQ Rehabilitation Policy to ensure the employee is aware of the options they have available. It is very reassuring to the employee to know that they can gradually return to work in a supported way (eg as a supernumerary) if this is necessary. Briefly describe your role and how you can help.
- Discuss pay and leave issues. Ensure the employee has access to the appropriate forms for Sick Leave or WorkCover. Check that he/she has the appropriate medical certificate. Arrange for the paperwork to be received as soon as possible. Explain the "28 day rule" for WorkCover
- Are there any other concerns/uncertainties/burning issues? Ensure you provide an opportunity to discuss issues of concern with the employee
- Arrange a time for an Initial Interview at school or at their home (or in the hospital, if necessary). Alternatively, when will the next contact occur? Consider your need for support from the Rehabilitation Consultant or Corporate Service Unit SPO.

Making the Initial Contact is one of the most important tasks of the school-based WPRC. Take the time to do it right!



How do I obtain existing medical reports

Rehabilitation co-ordinators are able to access medical reports held by QSuper and WorkCover for their clients to assist in effective case management. By requesting existing medical reports from external agencies, we are able to obtain medical reports in a timely manner as well as saving Education Queensland money.

Please note that medical reports should only be obtained if they are recent and apply to the current injury of the employee. These reports are useful in providing further detailed information. This information assists with setting the goal of your case management and assist with the ongoing management of the employees rehabilitation.

To obtain a medical report from either QSuper or WorkCover you will need to supply a copy of their signed medical authority. They will then provide you with a copy of the relevant reports free of charge. Medical reports will not be released to you without the employees authority.



Rehabilitation Co-ordinator Survey

Thank you to all of the co-ordinators around the state who replied to the Rehabilitation Co-ordinator survey. We received a total of 200 surveys back, making a response rate of 20.55%.

An overwhelming 68.5% of you manage 1-5 rehab cases each year. However, 84% of respondents advised they had no time allocated to perform their role. An allocation of between 1 and 5 hours per week was required by 24% of respondents to do their rehabilitation co-ordinator role, while 26.5%



responded that the time required varied. This information will be utilised to continue improving our Rehabilitation services.

Several staff around the state have been commended by fellow rehabilitation co-ordinators for providing an excellent service. Those who have been commended are: Peter Ashby, Kendal Franks, Larelle Frauenfelder, Meeca Lynch, Kitty Pang, Rhonda Stokes and Noreen Ward. Congratulations all on a job well done!

If you would like to see a particular issue covered in the next issue of THE REHAB REVIEW, please contact the Rehabilitation Team on 3237 0789.



Don't forget to check out our new Rehabilitation website at:

<http://education.qld.gov.au/health/rehab>

The site has a number of resources to help you manage illnesses and injuries at your workplace - including rehab forms, tool kit and FAQs.