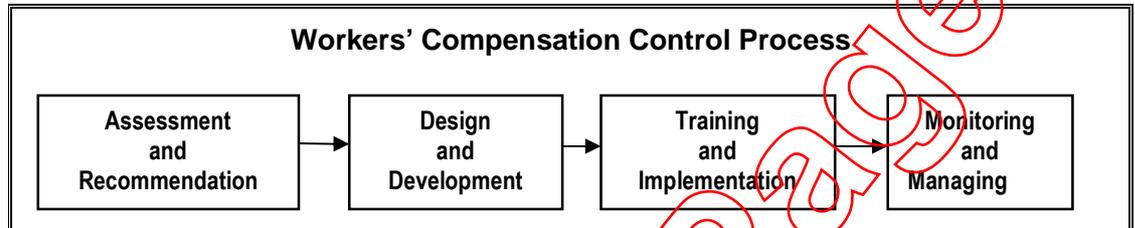


Chapter 3: Training and Building Commitment

Implementing a Workers' Compensation Program

Steps for Implementation

Implementation of a workers' compensation management program has four distinct steps. These steps may be developed one at a time or several together depending on timeframe and resources.



Begin by selecting a project team of individuals who can influence the outcome of workers' compensation in the workplace.

Step 1: Assessment/Recommendations

A **best practices assessment tool** uses a series of diagnostic questions to assess the employer's current workers' compensation program and lists **recommendations for improvement** and how to achieve these goals.

Step 2: Design and Development

The **design and development** step involves developing formalized procedures to facilitate communication among the employee, injury coordinator, personnel, medical, and legal staff. These procedures consist of **templates, forms, sample letters**, and other documents used throughout the employer's workers' compensation program.

Step 3: Training and Implementation

Training provides top managers with the tools to administer the injury management process and perform post-injury response and return-to-work functions uniformly throughout the organization. **Implementation** follows training once top managers are comfortable with new forms, policies and procedures, and when the new workers' compensation **control process** is officially adopted company-wide.

Step 4: Monitoring and Managing

Monitoring and managing is critical for continued cost control. Once a program lowering costs is in place, control must be maintained over all aspects in order to continue to demonstrate on-going successful results by using post-implementation support and monitoring of processes, injury claims, and lost-time data.

Monitoring is done by file reviews, claims audits, and chairside visits. Stay in touch with the adjusters by having conference calls on a fixed schedule to share ideas, information, and techniques.

Forms & Procedures

Throughout the book we **reference and provide** many materials, forms, and sample documents. While a project team is free to design its own materials, we **recommend** using the **Workers' Comp Kit®** forms.

Getting Started

To implement a program these essential elements are needed:

- project team and team leader
- program name (short identifying name, e.g., CAT-- Claims and Transitional Duty)
- scheduled weekly meetings (e.g., Wednesday, 2 p.m. EST)
- timetable (updated each week, to hold team members accountable)

NOTE: Samples of **Implementation Timetable** and **Facilitator's Training Agenda** at the end of this chapter.

Key Training Responsibilities

Before implementing a workers' compensation management program, all employees must be made aware of changes and key personnel must be trained to use new forms and procedures.

Some key training activities include:

- Identify and catalog day-to-day responsibilities.
- Factor in new processes and procedures to develop an implementation strategy for existing and new responsibilities.
- Communicate new processes to all employees; emphasize benefits and encourage participation.
- Disseminate new policies and procedures throughout the employee population.
- Promote the program via memos, brochures, posters, newsletters, acknowledgment, etc.
- Reinforce management commitment via results-oriented newsletters/key inquiries by top managers.
- Identify and document transitional duty tasks.
- Incorporate new policies and procedures into human resources or hire packet for current and all new employees.

When a workers' compensation management program is in the planning phase, training must occur up and down the command chain to ensure everyone is on board with the new initiative.

Injury coordinators must consider training two key groups:

- Supervisors
- Senior Management

Supervisors are the front-line implementers of critical aspects of workers' compensation management, including post-injury response and return to work. It is to the company's advantage to ensure consistent training occurs across the board to implement objectives uniformly. Supervisor training is discussed later in this chapter.

Management Awareness

On the other side of workers' compensation management training, senior management needs to be made aware of the new processes. You want to bring management on board to elicit backing and commitment to the workers' compensation management program.

Management does not require "training," per se; they require information so they can be prepared to make informed judgments about this program.

Generally, senior management is not interested in the day-to-day details of running the program – that is the injury coordinator's responsibility. However, they want to know why they should support the initiative. You must convince them.

When management sees how the workers' compensation management plan is a practical application of cost savings techniques, they will be more inclined to support the initiative.

Management Presentation

Presenting to Supervisors

A great deal of thought should go into training the supervisors so they are well informed and prepared for the most common obstacles.

Supervisor training is where workers' compensation management goals are put into practice as supervisors learn to implement new procedures in the workplace.

- Once training is completed, injury coordinators and supervisors can perform the workers' compensation management functions as outlined in their respective best practices.
- Injury coordinators focus on the overall orchestration of workers' compensation initiatives.
- Supervisors will be on the front lines enforcing post-injury response procedures for the 24 hours after an injury, and working in tandem with the injury coordinator to process the paperwork.

Supervisors must be trained so they are prepared for the most common obstacles and can participate in a workers' compensation management program designed to cultivate a positive employer-employee relationship.

Participants learn procedures ensuring communication remains uniform among the employee, supervisor, injury coordinator, medical and legal personnel, and claims handling people.

- Supervisors must train employees so that if a work-related incident occurs everyone knows their roles and responsibilities as supervisors, injured employees, and witnesses.
- Supervisors must identify the "go-to" resources to obtain answers for questions they themselves cannot answer.

Conflicting Roles of Supervisors

A supervisor may have conflicting roles – as a friend of the employee, yet responsible to management for a thorough investigation and injury prevention. Training must address this issue.

While friendships may exist, everyone is an employee and responsibilities are paramount. Training is not just about procedures, it is also about the right attitude and effective communication.

Supervisors Must Be Involved

Supervisors must be involved for many reasons. One of the primary reasons is they interact on a daily basis with employees.

Supervisors are on the front lines, so they are your best source of anecdotal information about work-related incidents, eyewitnesses, employee progress, etc.

- Supervisors are authority figures and leaders in the day-to-day operations of your facility.
- The supervisor, the first to know when an employee is injured, sets the tone for rapid treatment and return to work.
- Supervisors ensure injured employees are transported to the medical facility, with proper documentation. Thus, they know where the correct forms are located, how to fill them out, and how to send them to key people, i.e., the injury coordinator.
- The supervisor may also conduct the accident investigation.
- A brief training program or a brochure should be used to explain the new process and new terms.
- To communicate effectively, use training programs and all materials in the language of the participants to account for language differences.

Develop Supervisor Guide

Develop a Supervisor Guide to workplace injuries after the post-injury process is in place, and then train supervisors how to follow it.

Almost all supervisors have key roles in safety efforts at the workplace; this new process merges with those job responsibilities.