

DLI VRU: Helping injured workers get back to work



About VRU

The Department of Labor and Industry's Vocational Rehabilitation unit (VRU) provides vocational rehabilitation services to injured workers whose claims have been denied by the employer/insurer. The legislative rationale was labeled "early (vocational rehabilitation) intervention" to provide needed vocational assistance to injured workers prior to, rather than after, a determination of liability by the courts.

These services are provided or coordinated by vocational rehabilitation counselors who are registered as qualified rehabilitation consultants (QRCs) and are neutral parties in the rehabilitation process. They are professionals who have knowledge of medical factors, local labor markets and statutes concerning rehabilitation within Minnesota's workers' compensation law. Injured workers have the right to choose a QRC and to take an active part in developing their own written rehabilitation plan.

Although all injured workers may be eligible, VRU primarily serves claims where liability is denied by the insurer. The unit has 10 QRCs and four placement staff members in six regional locations throughout Minnesota.

VRU goals

Vocational rehabilitation is provided to injured workers who meet certain criteria under Minnesota Statutes § 176.102. Rehabilitation is designed to:

- restore the injured worker to a job related to their former employment; or
- return the injured worker to a job in another work area that produces an economic status as close as possible to what they would have enjoyed without a disability.

Making a consultation request

For a denied claim or a dispute about medical causation, to qualify for services provided by VRU, the injured worker or their attorney needs to initiate a dispute by filing a claim petition or an objection to discontinuance with the court. The injured worker may then contact VRU to request a consultation.

Cost

Unless agreed to in a settlement, injured workers do not have to pay for VRU services. The costs for service are paid by insurance carriers, self-insured employers or special state funds.



Rehabilitation consultation and eligibility

A rehabilitation consultation is a meeting between the injured employee and a QRC to determine whether the employee is eligible for rehabilitation services. According to Minnesota Rules Part 5220.0100, subp. 22, an employee is eligible if, because of the effects of an injury or disease, whether or not combined with the effects of a prior injury or disability, the employee:

- is permanently precluded or is likely to be permanently precluded from engaging in the employee's usual and customary occupation or from engaging in the job the employee had at the time of injury;
- cannot reasonably be expected to return to suitable, gainful employment with the date-of-injury employer; and
- can reasonably be expected to return to suitable, gainful employment through the provision of rehabilitation services, considering the treating physician's opinion of the employee's work ability.



To determine the employee's eligibility for rehabilitation services, the QRC speaks not only with the employee, but also the employer and the treating doctor, when necessary.

When the employee is eligible for rehabilitation services, a rehabilitation plan will be written, agreed to, signed by all parties and filed with the Department of Labor and Industry. The QRC will provide the services necessary to complete the plan, which may include the following.

- Job analysis
- Job development
- Job modification
- Job placement
- Job-seeking skills training
- Labor-market survey
- Medical management
- On-the-job training
- Retraining assessment
- Retraining planning
- Return-to-work assistance
- Transferable skills analysis
- Vocational counseling
- Vocational evaluation
- Vocational testing
- Work adjustment

More information

For information about workers' compensation benefits, contact the Department of Labor and Industry's Workers' Compensation Division Help Desk at 651-284-5005 (press 3), 800-342-5354 (press 3) or helpdesk.dli@state.mn.us.

For more information about VRU services, visit dli.mn.gov/business/workers-compensation/work-comp-dlis-vocational-rehabilitation-unit-vru or call 651-284-5038 or 888-772-5500.

Locations

All offices: phone 651-284-5038 or 888-772-5500; fax 651-284-5734

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