

OVERVIEW OF AMENDMENTS TO VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES POLICY

**Amended: January 29, 2003
Effective Date: November 1, 2002**

A. BACKGROUND

On October 16, 2002, the Panel of Administrators approved amendments to the Board's policies concerning vocational rehabilitation entitlement and services.

The amendments approved by the Panel apply to the Board's policies concerning the following topics:

1. Principles & Goals
2. Eligibility Criteria
3. Referral Guidelines
4. Programs & Services
5. Extent of Service
6. Relocation

B. PURPOSE

This practice directive provides a general overview of the significant amendments and related directives. Please refer to the topic specific practice directives for further information:

- Practice Directive #51, *Programs & Services*
- Practice Directive #52, *Extent of Service*
- Practice Directive #54, *Relocation*

C. EFFECTIVE DATES AND TRANSITION RULES

The policy changes are effective November 1, 2002 and apply to all decisions made on or after November 1, 2002, on claims adjudicated under the *Act* as amended by the *Workers Compensation Amendment Act, 2002*. For recurrences, please refer to Practice Directive #38A, *Effective Dates and Transition Rules*, and Practice Directive #38B, *Recurrences*.

D. OVERVIEW OF POLICY AMENDMENTS

1. Principles & Goals

The amendments in RSCM Vol. II, Policy item C11-85.00, *Principles and Goals*, highlight the need for early intervention and the provision of cost-effective service. The goals focus on return to work as the primary objective and start to delineate the nature and extent of service to be provided based on the worker's benefit entitlement.

Please see Practice Directive # 52, *Extent of Service*.

2. Eligibility Criteria

The amendments in RSCM Vol. II, Policy item C11-86.00, *Eligibility Criteria*, provide guidelines on determining a worker's eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services in relation to the benefit entitlement provisions of the *Act*.

Please see Practice Directive # 51, *Programs & Services*.

3. Referral Guidelines

The amendments in RSCM Vol. II, Policy item C11-86.10, *Referral Guidelines*, set out those situations where a worker may be referred to Vocational Rehabilitation Services. A referral may be made where a claim meets the eligibility criteria specified in RSCM Vol. II, Policy item C11-86.00 as well as the other specific situations described in the policy as amended.

4. Programs & Services

The amendments in RSCM Vol. II, Policy item C11-88.00, *Nature and Extent of Programs and Services*, outline the nature and extent of service entitlement according to the benefit entitlement provisions of the *Act*. The amended policy specifies that vocational rehabilitation should be initiated on an early intervention basis. It further outlines the requirements for a vocational rehabilitation plan, including the need for the financial implications of implementing the plan and/or its cost effectiveness.

Please see Practice Directive # 51, *Programs & Services*.

5. Extent of Service

The amendments in RSCM Vol. II, Policy items C11-88.30 through C11-88.50 provide specific timelines for job search, training on the job, and formal training. The policies also provide specific criteria for consideration of extensions. The amendments to Policy item C11-88.60, *Business Start-ups*, provide new criteria for consideration of business start-up requests.

Please see Practice Directive # 52, *Extent of Service*.

6. Relocation

RSCM Vol. II, Policy item C11-88.90, *Vocational Rehabilitation Relocation*, is an addition to the RSCM. Previously the policy on relocation was only addressed in Policy item #40.12, *Suitable Occupation*. Policy item C11-88.90 states that relocation may only be considered after all other return to work within a reasonable commuting distance has been considered. It outlines specific factors that may be taken into account in determining whether or not relocation is a reasonable option.

Please see Practice Directive # 54, *Relocation*.