

# Early Access to Physiotherapy Program

## Introduction

The Early Access to Physiotherapy Program (EAPP) provides workers who have sustained a sprain or strain injury at work with expedited access to an EAPP physiotherapist, as early as the day of their injury.

If your company has an active return-to-work (RTW) program, the EAPP enables you to leverage your existing RTW program and partner with one or more EAPP physiotherapy clinics. The clinic will provide an initial treatment and assess your injured worker's functional abilities. You will be provided with a functional assessment form that outlines your worker's current capabilities, ensures your offer of modified work is appropriate, and matches your injured worker's current functional abilities.

By encouraging and providing appropriate support for injured workers to recover on the job, you're investing into the long-term success and sustainability of both your business and your workers.

### **Maintain productivity**

Reduce workflow interruptions and training replacements

### **Retain experienced workers**

Return injured workers in a safe and timely manner

### **Reduce costs**

Help reduce your insurance premiums, hiring, and training replacement costs

### **Engage your workers**

Increase trust and enhance your relationship with your worker by helping them to stay connected to the workplace

Your workers will realize a faster recovery time and a quicker return to their life activities, while maintaining their usual income. The success of this program will depend on the strength of relationships built between employers, clinics, and workers participating in the EAPP.

# What are the benefits of the EAPP?

Early and active treatment for the injured worker reduces the likelihood of long-term health effects

Functional assessment completed by a medical practitioner to ensure modified duties offered match the injured worker's capabilities

Expedited access to physiotherapy treatment for your workers with sprains and strains

EAPP-approved physiotherapy clinics throughout B.C.

On-site physio coaching can be requested to assist the injured worker's transition back to regular duties and provide support to the worker

The option to contract with more than one EAPP-approved physiotherapy clinic or provider

## Requirements for participating in the EAPP

If you are interested in the EAPP, ensure you have the following in place:

- A qualified first aid attendant to conduct an initial assessment determining whether the worker would benefit from physiotherapy.
- A robust injury-management program that includes modified work duties offered on the day of injury.
- An assigned RTW Coordinator with injury management competencies.

A **completed online self-assessment** that determines your suitability as an employer to participate in the EAPP. If you meet all the requirements in the self-assessment form, please submit your form to [EmployerRTWPrograms@WorkSafeBC.com](mailto:EmployerRTWPrograms@WorkSafeBC.com).



If you are unsure if you qualify for the EAPP program, please contact the Employer RTW Programs Support Line at 604.279.8155, or toll free at 1.877.633.6233.

## Getting started

If you have met all the requirements, as noted in the previous section, contact WorkSafeBC to set up your EAPP.

- Once your Employer Criteria Checklist is completed, review the list of **pre-approved EAPP** physiotherapy clinics in your area.
  - Select a clinic or clinics that are nearest to your workplace(s). This will allow for timely travel to and from the physio by workers. You may select more than one clinic or provider to best meet your needs.
  - Prior to finalizing your selection(s), arrange to meet with the clinic(s) to discuss a partnership, review the principles document, and other business opportunities.
  - If you would like to partner with a physiotherapy clinic that is not on the pre-approved list, please contact the Employer RTW Programs Support Line.
- After your physiotherapy clinic(s) are confirmed, you may provide the physiotherapist(s) with an orientation of your workplace to help familiarize them with your work activities and opportunities for modified work.

Please note any associated costs to the physiotherapist are covered by the employer.



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### Once you have an EAPP in place:

- Communicate the details of the program to your workers, union(s) if applicable, and supervisors.
- Continue to work closely with your physiotherapy clinic(s) in the recovery of your injured workers.



For **sample checklists** for employees and supervisors speak with one of our RTW nurses at the Employer RTW Programs Support Line at 604.279.8155, or toll free at 1.877.633.6233.

## EAPP referral criteria and procedure

If one of your workers reports a new soft-tissue workplace injury (defined as a sprain or strain), take the following steps:

- Complete the first aid assessment, initial modified work offer, and worker has contacted WorkSafeBC through Teleclaim
- Complete the EAPP referral form with your worker
- Refer the worker to your chosen physiotherapy clinic

Note that referrals to EAPP must be made within 72 hours of a worker's time of injury.

## EAPP worker eligibility:

To be eligible ensure that your worker:

- Is employed by your company and is not a contractor
- Is aware of the EAPP, and its purpose and benefits
- Has experienced a recent soft-tissue injury that resulted from a specific incident at work
- Has reported the injury to their supervisor or first aid attendant within 72 hours
- Has contacted WorkSafeBC through Teleclaim and established a claim
- Understands and is participating in your injury-management or return-to-work program

## WorkSafeBC will not cover costs for the EAPP to Physiotherapy when:

- The injury is a result of a motor vehicle incident and the right of election to pursue a claim with WorkSafeBC has not been submitted
- The injury is caused by a repetitive activity over time, rather than a specific incident
- You are notified of a WorkSafeBC decision to disallow or suspend the claim (initial assessment will be covered but any additional treatments will be the responsibility of the employer)
- You are objecting to WorkSafeBC's acceptance of the claim
- A new medical diagnosis is provided that precludes participation in physiotherapy treatment or is outside of the program criteria

Please note: Any costs related to referrals by employers outside of the eligibility criteria outlined in the previous section will be the responsibility of the employer.

## FAQs

### **What type of injury is a sprain or strain?**

A sprain or strain is an injury to the muscles, ligaments, and tendons, and is often characterized by swelling, loss of function, and pain (also known as a soft-tissue or musculoskeletal injury [MSI]).

### **What is a functional abilities assessment?**

A functional abilities assessment measures an injured worker's level of function (including possible limitations) and ability to safely perform modified work duties following a workplace injury.

### **What is a Functional Abilities Form (FAF)?**

A FAF is used by health care providers to communicate the temporary limitations of the injured worker to the worker and employer. The findings are used to guide recovery-at-work discussions and to facilitate safe and appropriate work.

### **What are the costs to me as an employer?**

There are no out-of-pocket expenses charged by WorkSafeBC to you as an employer. The cost for this service will be added to your overall claims costs and incorporated into your premium calculation. However, the partnering physiotherapy clinic may ask you to cover the costs associated with an orientation to your worksite and RTW program, or the cost of travel for coaching.

Costs for the initial assessment, completion of the FAF, and ongoing treatments for accepted claims are covered by WorkSafeBC.

### **How early can a worker be referred for a functional abilities assessment with a physiotherapist? What sort of information will I be provided with afterwards?**

As an employer, you can make a referral as early as the day of a worker's injury. All referrals to the program must be made within 72 hours from the date of injury. The physiotherapist will send you a copy of the FAF immediately following your injured worker's assessment.

### **What do I need to have in place before setting up this program?**

You will need to have an active injury-management program that can accommodate injured workers with modified work activities. The activities need to be within the limitations identified in the FAF.

You should also create awareness of EAPP by promoting it to your workers.

### **What is a modified work offer?**

A modified work offer is a temporary work alternative that you can offer your workers. The offer is intended to promote an injured worker's gradual return to their pre-injury job following a workplace injury. The offer may involve duties that are different from the worker's regular employment, or it might be a modification of regular duties and/or hours of work. This should be a short-term arrangement with a return to regular duties anticipated within a two to three-week time frame. A gradual return to work (GRTW) does not necessarily mean gradual hours. Ideally, the EAPP promotes modified duties for the worker's full shift (e.g., an eight-hour work shift).

### **What if the worker refuses to participate in the modified duties I'm offering?**

WorkSafeBC supports modified work as an important component of a worker's recovery from injury. If the modified duties offered are within the worker's capabilities, they will be encouraged to participate in the duties. It's important for the employer, supervisor, and injured worker to work collaboratively in identifying appropriate duties that support the worker's recovery at work. Submit the initial modified work offer via the employer portal, even if the worker has declined the offer. A WorkSafeBC claims officer may become involved and contact the worker as they consider all submitted information.



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### **On the same day or during their next shift, meet with the injured worker to:**

- Ensure the injured worker has received a Return-to-Work package and the written initial modified work offer.
- Obtain the FAF, which was completed by the physiotherapist.
- Develop a return-to-work plan.
- Maintain regular contact with the injured worker for the duration of the modified work, or until the worker has returned to their regular duties.

For more information and to learn how you can participate in the Early Access to Physiotherapy Program, visit [WorkSafeBC.com/EAPP](https://www.worksafebc.com/EAPP) and contact the Employer RTW Programs Support Line at 604.279.8155 or toll free 1.877.633.6233.