

# WORK COMP INSIGHTS

## Selecting and Training an Injury Management Coordinator

Even with the best safety programs in place, accidents can still happen. When an injury occurs several parties can be involved: the injured worker, their supervisor, medical personnel, human resources and more. While all these people may be working to help the injured employee, they may not be very clear on how to work together unless they have a coach. That coach is the Injury Management Coordinator (IMC).

For this individual to be successful, they need the tools and support to provide the entire organization with pre-injury education, clear expectations and proactive communications and procedures when an injury occurs. Generally, the IMC will be a member of the human resources department.

### Duties of an IMC

IMCs are responsible for helping injured employees return to work as soon as possible, even if it's on modified duty. This is the most effective strategy that can be taken toward the employee's recovery and goes a long way in avoiding lost time expenses. Returning to work is a great form of therapy, preventing injured workers from becoming isolated and developing a self-image that is defined by their injury. Furthermore, returning to work prevents injured employees from inadvertently losing their group health eligibility.

The return to work process is all about good communications, especially in-person when possible. The coordinator is also responsible for creating and maintaining official case records and corresponding with insurance carriers - especially the claims adjuster.

To support this program, the IMC must educate employees (including supervisors and managers) about the cost of workplace injuries and the physical, emotional and financial benefits of early return to work. They must maintain relationships with local doctors and clinics that understand and support early return to work and use evidence based protocols - such as those

established by the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM) - to benchmark their treatment outcomes and utilization.

This individual will be responsible for developing policies and procedures, as well as other written materials, to support the program; they must also create and facilitate training for supervisors and workers on general workers compensation

issues and processes. Lastly, the IMC must periodically review, evaluate and update the workplace injury management system.

### Selecting or Hiring an IMC

The day-to-day tasks of an IMC will vary based your company's size and type of business. Many companies find it sufficient to name an existing employee to this position. In many cases, the tasks of an IMC will mesh well with the duties of your existing human resources or operations departments. In larger companies, hiring a designated IMC may be advisable. Regardless of whether your IMC will have other job duties or not, you should have two major expectations for the person you name to this position. First, the best candidate will already have strong interpersonal and communication skills along with an extensive knowledge of your industry

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**Injury Management  
Coordinators oversee claims to  
ensure injured employees  
receive the care they need  
and are able to return to work  
as soon as possible.**

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or specific business. Second, the candidate will need time and resources to develop knowledge of specific workers' compensation issues related to workers' health. If this candidate has other duties in your organization, you will need to define priorities and possibly shift some responsibilities to the other staff.

While you may already have someone informally serving in this position by facilitating basic paperwork and communications with injured employees, it is important that their role is clearly defined. If an informal IMC is not given the time or resources to adequately manage their responsibilities, their ability to handle claims can suffer resulting in lost time and additional expenses.

When evaluating specific candidates, make sure they are effective communicators that possess a high-level understanding of your organization's structure and culture as well as a detailed knowledge (that may need to be developed) of the task-level operations that occur in the business.

## **Training a Successful IMC**

A successful IMC needs both start-up and ongoing training on various topics to be successful at this complex and vital role. It's crucial this individual maintains an ongoing knowledge of workers' compensation issues, legislation and topics. They must also maintain an ongoing relationship with community resources (such as bilingual education programs, substance abuse and mental health centers, etc.). Your medical provider or local hospitals are a good starting point for identifying these resources. More broadly, IMCs should develop a clinic relationship, Return to Work program and hiring support to avoid future claims.

## **Continued Value**

The processes surrounding employee injury require continued monitoring and support to ensure that employees return to work as soon as possible, allowing claims to be closed quickly. IMCs may require an investment to train and establish, but in the long run will provide valuable cost savings to your company.