

STEPS FOR OBTAINING COOPERATION FROM THE EMPLOYEE'S MEDICAL PROVIDER

STEP 1 Create and prioritize a list of all key providers in your medical community:

- List all providers who have treated your employees over the past 3 to 5 years.
- Prioritize this list according to the total number of employees treated by each provider during this time.
- Utilize your Workers' Compensation Provider Panel.

STEP 2 Develop and Implement an Education Strategy for Each Key Health Care Provider:

At this point you should, if possible, devise a specific strategy to develop a relationship with and educate each health care provider. You may use the same strategy for all practitioners or you may develop different strategies for each key health care provider. Consider the following:

- **Face-To-Face Meetings:** Schedule individual face-to-face meetings with practitioners to (a) develop relationships, (b) dispel any previous negative impressions, and (c) discuss and/or drop off materials summarizing your company's Return-To-Work Program.
- **Professional Meetings:** Address Professional Association meetings that key practitioners may attend. Use the same basic strategy for individual meetings. Explain the *mechanics* of your Return-To-Work Program. Remember, it is most important to clearly communicate the *philosophy* of the program.
- **Personal Correspondence:** If you cannot arrange to meet practitioners, try a personal letter (not a form letter). The letter should communicate your interest in meeting with the practitioner personally. As an attachment, be sure to provide a brief description of your company's Return-To-Work Program, or at least a statement of philosophy. Ensure that the practitioner knows that your company's Return-To-Work Program is not "business as usual."
- **Follow-Up Calls and Thank-You Letters:** Part of your education strategy could include a brief phone call preceding important letters sent to a practitioner. This phone call builds rapport, and may provide the necessary context for an important letter requiring the provider's response. Practitioners also generally appreciate a brief call or a thank-you note at the conclusion of a difficult case.

STEP 3 Develop Sample Documents Explaining Your Company's Return-To-Work Program:

There are numerous occasions when a concise and professional description of the Return-To-Work Program will be of value. Rather than developing an intimidating all-inclusive document, it would be preferable to create a series of freestanding one-page documents, each briefly describing a key concept.

STEP 4 Develop Sample Letters for Communicating with Doctors:

Unfortunately, many letters written to medical practitioners ask the wrong questions.