

## **L&I Ability to Work Assessment (AWA) Lean Effort:**

For claims at risk for long-term disability, those with at least six months of time-loss, almost three quarters will go through the AWA process.

This is a crucial time in an injured worker's recovery period when a successful return to the labor market is still likely. Two thirds of injured workers are routinely found to be able to work or eligible for retraining in the AWA process and the sooner these workers return to the labor market or begin a retraining program, the higher their likelihood of success.

Currently, the median duration of AWA referrals made in November 2012 is 156 days. This is down from 220 days for referrals when we started in January 2011. The change is largely due to a combination of the implementing claims standard work and improved communication and collaboration with private vocational rehabilitation firms and counselors.

Reducing the duration of an AWA referral has the potential to generate considerable savings. Each day of time loss paid costs approximately \$68, and in 2012, around 7,200 AWA referrals were made. If two-thirds of these referrals end in a determination that can lead to employment; then the decrease in duration observed in 2012 days would generate a savings in time-loss payments of around \$15 million per year.

### **Countermeasure testing**

Once a process has been mapped, team members gather information to determine where there are problems or barriers within a process. This creates focus for root cause analysis and problem solving. Countermeasures are identified to attempt to eliminate the problems. The AWA team has identified countermeasures to address the three most frequent barriers identified: delays in initiating the intake meeting including non-cooperation, delays in receiving job analyses from providers, and delays in receiving the services providers request to help them complete job analyses.

### **What does the AWA team do?**

The AWA team meets weekly to review progress on countermeasures; address issues which arise in the units, and to review the barrier report details generated on all open AWAs. Each claims manager (CM) receives a report on every open AWA weekly. The CM must provide the detail of progress towards completing the AWA in 90 days. Unit vocational service specialist (VSS), claim leads, supervisors and operations managers review these reports and provide assistance where needed.

### **AWA Work Team**

Stephanie Ackley; Jeannie Bonagofski; Caitlin Brooks; Eric Brooks; Julie Brooks; Cougar Burleigh; Nicole Clintsman; Melanie Dore; Amanda Fisher; Joe Gonia; Mark Goodwin; Erich Hahn; Robert Jackson; Rob Johnson; Don Lane; Kristine Ostler; Jeff Reichelderfer; Mary Reister; Bobbi Jo Schoelkopf; Tamra Shaefer; Wayne Shatto; Bambi Sotak; Donna Spencer; Chelsea Spooner; John Weidman; Sara Wetsch-Betts; Richard Wilson;