

# Occupational Injury Service (OIS) Guide

Helping you

**STAY** in the  
**GAME**

**WCB**

Workers'  
Compensation  
Board

Alberta

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# What is Occupational Injury Service (OIS)?

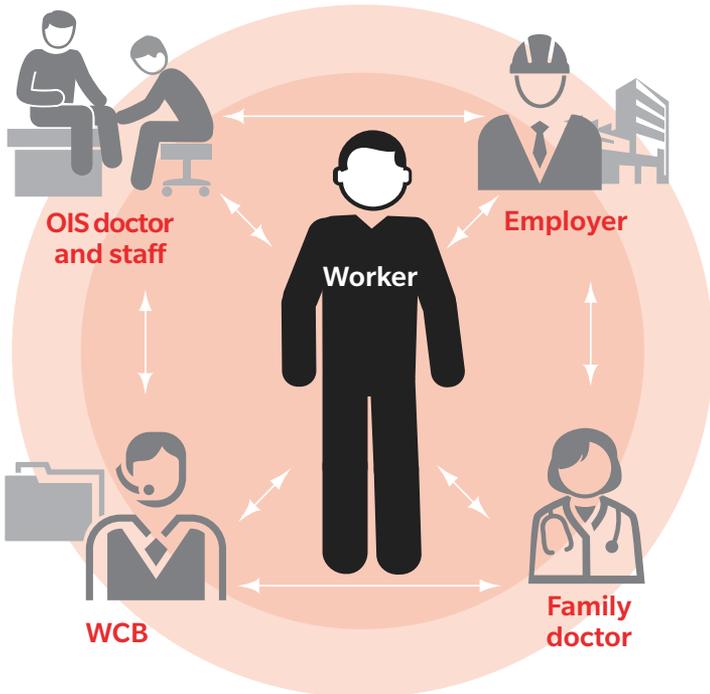
*OIS provides workers with quick access to a doctor, ensuring a safe and timely return to work is achieved.*

## Goal:

To help injured workers return to work safely by providing quick access to quality medical care and facilitating communication between the worker, employer, doctor and WCB.

## What is an OIS clinic?

A medical clinic that has applied for and met all the requirements needed to deliver OIS. They are staffed with doctors, nurses and other rehabilitation staff with a background in the treatment of work-related injuries. It is a clinic for people hurt at work.



## The focus:

- **Timely, safe, sustainable return to work.** The sooner a worker safely returns to work, the less impact on both the worker and worksite operations.
- **Expedited medical/rehabilitation treatment.** Fast and appropriate medical attention and rehabilitation (if needed) will help a worker return to work sooner.
- **It is proven that the best rehabilitation approach for most sprains and strains is staying active.** Medical evidence shows it is not only safe for people who are injured to participate in physical activities but it will also help them recover faster.
- **Modified work is one of the best forms of rehabilitation.** Modifying a job, performing different tasks or reducing hours are all types of modified work. This includes changes in tasks or functions, workload (e.g. hours or schedules), environment or work area and equipment. It can also include work normally performed by others or work specifically designated as a modified work program.
- **Educating workers and employers** on injury prevention and return-to-work planning.

## The benefits:

- Quick access to quality medical care helps injured workers recover quickly and safely, and ultimately return to work.
- OIS doctors have knowledge of the employer site, operations and modified work options so they can help create a practical return-to-work plan.
- OIS disability management reports are completed with detailed physical work capabilities to help determine modified work opportunities and return-to-work dates.
- Ensures the worker, employer, case manager and doctor are all informed with the same information. This helps with return-to-work planning because everyone is on the same page.
- Reduces compensation costs because workers are treated earlier and safe return-to-work plans are identified. Typically workers spend less time off work.
- Skilled/productive workers are retained, eliminating the need to re-hire or train a replacement.

# Signing up for OIS

(Employers need to do this before their workers can access OIS)



- Talk about OIS—ensure the organization can meet the obligations and that OIS is the right fit for the organization. (see the Roles and Responsibility section on pages 9 and 10).
- Complete the OIS sign-up sheet and send it in.
  - Identify which OIS clinic you would like to attend for your OIS orientation. An OIS provider profile is available at [www.wcb.ab.ca](http://www.wcb.ab.ca). Although the OIS service is standardized across providers, each provider has some differences (e.g. hours of operation, types of minor injuries they can treat) so ensure you read the provider summary.
  - If you have more than one WCB account number ensure each one completes and submits a sign-up sheet.
- The OIS provider chosen on the sign-up sheet will set up an orientation time. Feel free to bring staff (e.g. health and safety officers, supervisors, etc.) along to the orientation or request an orientation on your worksite. The orientation ensures you fully understand how to access and implement OIS in your organization.
- The OIS provider will also schedule a time to come tour the worksite. The intent of the tour is to gain an understanding of the operations, gather available physical job demands analysis information, understand modified work opportunities and identify how to tailor OIS to best meet individual needs.
- In most cases, it will be disability management staff from the OIS clinic rather than the doctor who will visit the worksite.
- After the orientation, identify the specific internal process steps to access OIS in your organization (e.g. who do workers report to, who will take them to the clinic etc.). The OIS provider can assist you with this. WCB also has OIS resources online.
- Next, arrange an information session for workers and union representatives (if applicable) to orientate them to OIS. Again, the OIS provider can assist you with this (if needed).

# Success tips from OIS employers

- Integrate OIS into your organization's disability management vision, culture and existing processes.
- Work with the OIS provider to customize OIS to fit the organization, not the other way around.
- Identify key organization change agents (e.g. union reps, safety committee members) and use them to help educate staff about OIS.
- Attend the case conference. It ensures everyone understands their role in return to work.
- Do your homework. Fully understand and support the OIS process by fulfilling all of your requirements (e.g. availability of modified work, attending return-to-work case conferences etc.).
- Be transparent about the process:
  - OIS is a voluntary option for workers—show them the benefits.
  - Provide a venue for constructive feedback and act upon it.
- OIS is successful because of partnerships—work together with the OIS team (worker, OIS doctor, WCB) to resolve issues and make the process better.

## What to do when an injury happens

### 1. Injured worker tells supervisor.

### 2. Assess injury.

### 3. If emergency care is needed, transport to the hospital. For minor injuries, arrange transportation to an OIS clinic.

It's a good idea to have the supervisor accompany the injured worker to the clinic as recovery and return-to-work plans will be discussed. If a supervisor cannot make it, ensure the injured worker has a contact name and number so the **return- to-work case conference** can happen.

### 4. Call ahead.

Contact the OIS clinic and let them know an injured worker is coming. When the worker arrives, remind the clinic it's an OIS visit. **This is critical as it helps the clinic plan to see the worker within 30 minutes of arriving.**

### 5. Report.

Employers and workers need to complete an injury report. Both can be found online, or the worker can complete at the clinic. The employer has 72 hours to report.

### 6. Injury assessment

by the OIS doctor.

# Making a return-to-work plan



*After assessing the injury, the OIS doctor will meet with the worker and employer to create a plan that will best support the worker, help them return to work safely and resolve their injury.*

## What **will** be discussed at this meeting?

- Tasks that are safe for the worker to perform and tasks that should not be performed.
- Modified work options.
- The best ways to manage the worker's injury in order to help them progress back to their regular duties.
- Any support the worker may need at work.

## What will **not** be discussed at this meeting?

- The worker's injury diagnosis.
- The worker's medical history.
- Any other personal and confidential information.

## Implementing the return-to-work plan

- The worker will be able to return to work as soon as it is medically safe to do so. Modified duties will allow the worker to stay an active member of their workplace while their injury heals.
- The worker and employer will work together to implement all parts of the return-to-work plan including modified duties and recommended treatments (e.g. stretches at work or attending physical therapy).
- The employer will support other recommended treatments by giving the worker time off to attend appointments, therapy, etc.
- The worker will attend all follow-up visits at the OIS clinic until their injury is healed.



## Roles and responsibilities

Who is part of the return-to-work team?

- worker
- employer
- OIS doctor
- WCB case manager or adjudicator

The worker's role is to actively participate in and manage their return-to-work process. The worker's responsibilities include:

- Reporting the injury or illness to a supervisor and deciding whether or not to visit an OIS clinic.
- Reporting the injury or illness to WCB.
- Visiting the OIS clinic as soon as possible after the injury and identifying themselves as an OIS patient.
- Contributing to the assessment by explaining how the injury occurred.
- Actively participating in the creation of a return-to-work plan.
- Taking charge of the recovery process by following the recommended treatment/rehabilitation plan.

- Maintaining regular contact with the return-to-work team and communicating any problems.
- Deciding who to work with for follow-up support — the OIS doctor or a family doctor — and notifying both.

### The worker has the right to:

- Understand that OIS is a voluntary option.
- Choose their treating doctor.
- Be actively involved in management of their injury and the return-to-work process.
- Be treated with respect and dignity.
- Be informed of all matters that apply to their return-to-work plan.
- Be provided with safe and productive modified work and to refuse work that does not meet these criteria.
- Expect personal health information to be kept confidential.

### The employer's role is to actively support their worker during the return-to-work process. The employer's responsibilities include:

- Making a commitment to disability management by signing up for OIS.
- Attending an OIS orientation at a clinic of their choice in order to learn how to get the best results from OIS.
- Arranging a worksite visit with the OIS provider and allowing them to gather information about physical job demands.
- Having appropriate modified work available for injured workers.
- Ensuring that workers know OIS is a voluntary option.
- Developing and introducing a workplace OIS process.
- Sending appropriate cases to OIS and contacting the clinic in advance when a case is on the way.
- Providing the injured worker with transportation to the OIS clinic.
- Completing a WCB report within 72 hours of injury.

## Roles and responsibilities (continued)

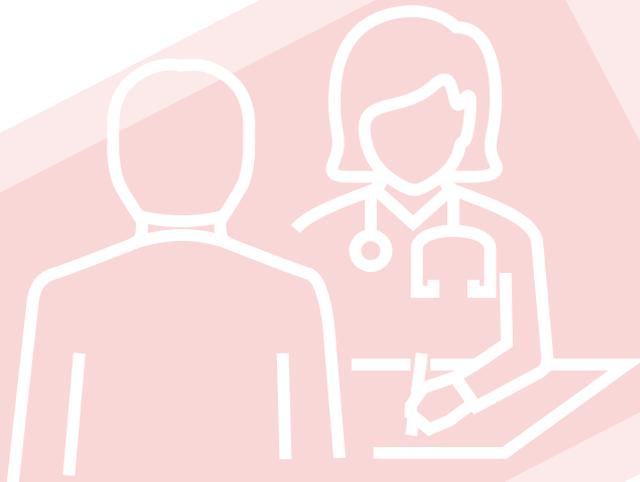
- Participating in OIS case conferences to discuss modified work options and create a return-to-work plan.
- Supporting all parts of the return-to-work plan including modified work, rehabilitation and follow-up visits.
- Maintaining regular contact with the return-to-work team and communicating any problems.
- Answering incoming calls from employers immediately.
- Helping the worker and employer complete WCB reports.
- Aiming to see OIS patients within an average of 30 minutes of arrival at the clinic (barring any emergency cases).
- Conducting a complete assessment of a worker's injury.

The role of the OIS provider is to provide expert medical care and advice in the development of the return-to-work plan. The OIS provider's responsibilities include:

- Having a knowledgeable staff with backgrounds in occupational medicine and disability management.
- Understanding WCB processes.
- Providing employers with an orientation that will teach them about OIS processes.
- Assisting the employer in introducing these processes to the worksite.
- Making a visit to the worksite to gather job information.
- Maintaining knowledge of the worksite through open communication or additional visits.
- Educating workers and employers about injury prevention, injury management and return-to-work strategies.
- Expediting any medical tests required for workers.
- Requesting referrals to any other rehabilitation specialists that the worker might need.
- Working with the worker and employer to create an individualized return-to-work plan.
- Completing all OIS reports.
- Leading the case conference.
- Providing follow-up visits and support with the employer and worker as needed.

WCB's role is to support the creation and implementation of the return-to-work plan. WCB's responsibilities include:

- Approving new OIS facilities.
- Training OIS staff and doctors on WCB processes.
- Providing quality assurance on all OIS clinics.
- Processing and managing submitted claims.
- Supporting the return-to-work plan through coordination of rehabilitation services.
- Providing OIS resources for workers, employers and health care providers.





## Questions frequently asked by workers

***Q: Am I required to see an OIS doctor?***

**A:** No. OIS is a voluntary option.

***Q: Why would I go see an OIS doctor instead of my regular family doctor?***

**A:** Your family doctor specializes in general health. OIS doctors have a special interest in work-related injuries. They have background knowledge of your worksite, will see you within 30 minutes on average and will complete WCB reports on the same day. The OIS doctor will also work with you and your employer to create an individualized return-to-work plan.

***Q: Who do OIS doctors work for?***

**A:** OIS doctors do not work for WCB or your employer. They work for private companies that have a contract with WCB to provide OIS services.

***Q: Can I follow-up with my own family doctor?***

**A:** Yes but please see only one doctor for your work-related injury. If you decide to follow-up with your family doctor, we ask that you notify both parties of your choice.

**Q: Can I transfer to OIS if I see my family doctor first?**

**A:** No. OIS is designed to be the first medical service received after an injury and it is under these circumstances that the OIS doctor can best create a care plan to support your recovery and help you return to work.

**Q: Can I start physiotherapy on my own?**

**A:** Yes but please ensure that the physiotherapy clinic is a WCB-approved provider (visit [www.wcb.ab.ca](http://www.wcb.ab.ca) for a list). The physiotherapist can immediately perform an assessment and first treatment but then must wait to hear if your claim has been accepted by WCB. Once accepted, WCB will consult with the clinic about further treatment.

**Q: What if my employer does not provide me with the recommended modified duties?**

**A:** Contact WCB if you have a work-related injury and your employer is unwilling or unable to accommodate you with modified duties. Your employer is not able to change your return-to-work plan — any modifications must be made

by the OIS doctor with your approval. If your employer feels that the modified duties in your plan are not appropriate, suggest that a follow-up call be arranged with the OIS doctor.

**Q: What about my confidential health information?**

**A:** OIS doctors and staff must obey privacy legislation. When communicating with your employer, the OIS doctor's focus will be on supporting your return to work — none of your personal medical information will be discussed. You will also receive a copy of the work readiness report so you are aware of what has been communicated.

**Q: When will I be paid by WCB?**

**A:** You should receive your first wage loss benefit cheque within 14 days of registering your claim.

# Questions frequently asked by employers



**Q: Will signing up for OIS cost me anything?**

**A:** No. OIS fees are only charged when a worker visits a clinic for an injury.

**Q: How do the costs associated with OIS affect my premiums?**

**A:** If you participate in the experience rating plan for small employers, your rates will not be affected.

If you participate in the experience rating plan for large employers, the following costs will be included in your experience rating:

- any no-time-lost claims of \$1,400 or more
- any lost-time claims

The amount charged to the claim is higher than the regular fee for a doctor's assessment. The fee includes fitness-for-work reporting –documentation from a doctor about your worker's current physical abilities and any activities they may be restricted from and a planning conversation with a doctor and your worker to discuss the claim and return-to-work options. The current fee is on our website at [www.wcb.a.bca](http://www.wcb.a.bca).

It is expected that, by using OIS services, more effective treatment will result in better outcomes and ultimately reduce the cost of claims.

**Q: Who pays if the claim is denied?**

**A:** WCB will cover the cost of the first OIS visit if the claim is denied.

**Q: Do I need to attend an OIS orientation before I start using the service?**

**A:** Yes. OIS is a partnership approach and employers and workers receive the greatest benefit if they understand their role in the return-to-work process.

**Q: Can I access multiple OIS providers?**

**A:** Yes. You may use any of the OIS providers across Alberta. However, to ensure the provider has a good understanding of your worksite operations, you should contact each one and have them conduct a worksite visit. Once your worker has visited a clinic for their assessment, they should stay with that clinic for the remainder of their care to avoid complicating the return-to-work plan.

**Q: Can I send workers to OIS clinics as walk-ins or do I have to call ahead?**

**A:** Please call ahead to the OIS clinic to let them know that a worker is coming so that the clinic can perform a triage assessment. For safety reasons, it is critical that the OIS clinic is only sent injuries that are within their scope of services.

**Q: Is the 30-minute wait time guaranteed?**

**A:** No. The average wait time is no more than 30 minutes. In unusual circumstances, such as the arrival of an emergency case, the wait may be longer. However, even in these instances the wait time is shorter than in an emergency room.

**Q: Can a worker who went to an emergency room still be seen in an OIS clinic?**

**A:** A worker should visit an emergency room if the OIS clinic is closed, if the injury is severe and requires ER treatment, or if the injury is beyond the scope of services provided by the OIS clinic.

In these cases, the worker can still be seen in an OIS clinic if:

- the time period between the ER visit and OIS visit is less than 96 hours
- the worker is not returning to the ER doctor for follow-up
- the worker has chosen to visit an OIS clinic

**Q: How long will it take before the worker can return to work?**

**A:** The time until full recovery varies from individual to individual and depends on the type and severity of the injury. The OIS doctor will give you and your worker an estimate at the time of the OIS assessment.

After the initial assessment, the OIS doctor will complete a work readiness report that will outline your worker's abilities and restrictions. The doctor will give you a copy of this report and discuss it with you and your worker at the return-to-work case conference.

**Q: Do I have to participate in every case conference?**

**A:** Yes. If you do not attend the case conference you will not get direct information about your worker's return-to-work plan and will not have the opportunity to provide input.

**Q: What if I have concerns about the service at an OIS clinic?**

**A:** Please contact the clinic manager and voice your concerns. Give the provider a chance to respond and be open to working with them to address the issue. If you feel like the provider has not listened or responded to your concern, call 780-498-3219.

## How to reach us

*If you need more information or have questions about the OIS service, please contact WCB's Health Care Strategy department and ask to speak to the OIS contract manager.*

**In Edmonton: 780-498-3219**

**WCB toll free number: 1-866-WCB-WCB1 (922-9221)**

**Email: [hcs@wcb.ab.ca](mailto:hcs@wcb.ab.ca)**

Additional OIS resources are available at [www.wcb.ab.ca](http://www.wcb.ab.ca)



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