DOC Reimbursed for Helping Injured Workers Stay on the Job

Local News

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Olympia, WA - The State's Department of Corrections has received more than $42,000 in less than a month thanks to a new program at the Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) called “Stay at Work”. The Department expects more checks from the program in the coming months.The Stay at Work program provides a financial incentive which encourages employers to bring injured workers quickly and safely back to modified duty or transitional work. L&I reports injured workers on time loss for more than six months have only a 50 percent chance of returning to work. That’s why early return to work is so important.Through the program, DOC can request reimbursement for 50 percent of the injured worker’s base wages for the modified duty assignment not to exceed $10,000. DOC can also be reimbursed for training or supply costs and equipment.DOC has used modified-duty jobs for many years as a way to keep our staff working while they recover from injury and save on increasing insurance premium costs, this program is a great way for the Department to benefit from helping our staff members to stay on the job. - Donna Haley, Human Resources Director Although STAY was created last summer, L&I didn’t specify the requirements to obtain reimbursement until January.

These include:Documentation from the health care provider (HCP) that the worker can’t do their regular job.A written job description for modified duty signed by the HCP.Attendance and payroll records for the modified duty hours.Receipts for tools or equipment purchased to help with return to work

Since DOC can request reimbursement for modified duty assignments back to June 15, 2011, when the law was passed, there is a backlog of claims which could generate reimbursement. The HR Claim Management Unit in Lacey is responsible for submitting the claim documentation which often includes preparing a job description for a modified duty position and asking the HCP for a signature

retrospectively. The first application submitted to L&I was 29 pages.“The Claim Management Unit has a big job to filter through the backlog of claims,” said Haley. “They have been doing a great job navigating through this complex paperwork.”The Unit started processing reimbursement claims at the top of the alphabet with Airway Heights Corrections Center. So far all of the money received has been for Airway Heights and CCD claims. The money received will be used to help offset associated costs.As of December local HR offices are following specific guidelines when offering modified duty to be sure all of the documentation is ready to submit to L&I. These records will be forwarded to the Claims Management Unit for the actual application process.At this point it’s hard to estimate how much DOC will be reimbursed, but it could be thousands of dollars for each worksite.- Vicki Skeers, Occupational Nurse Consultant