

WORKING TOGETHER

An easy reference guide for treating medical practitioners and mobile claims staff

Why is working together important for a treating medical practitioner and mobile claims staff?

In most cases, returning to work as early as possible whilst recovering from a workplace illness or injury has a positive impact on the physical and psychological wellbeing of an injured worker. Transparent collaboration, mutually respectful communication, access to medical information and timely action are key to ensure an injured worker's return to work and daily life can be effective and sustainable.

What is the role of mobile claims staff?

Mobile claims staff are involved in a claim to assist with early intervention, facilitating and supporting an injured worker with their recovery and return to work.

They work collaboratively with treating medical practitioners to coordinate and ensure the right recovery services are accessed at the right time.

Mobile claims staff are also responsible for coordinating worksite visits to understand where suitable duties and employment options may be available. Again, they liaise with treating medical practitioners to ensure that the injured worker's medical capacity allows them to return to work safely.

What can a treating medical practitioner expect from mobile claims staff?

A treating medical practitioner can expect mobile claims staff to request and share information relevant to the injured worker's illness or injury. This communication should be part of an ongoing relationship between the relevant parties to ensure the injured worker continues to receive the right supports and services as their recovery and return to work progresses.

Consideration should always be given to the worker's privacy, which includes where claim related

conversations occur. As we expect from medical practitioners, mobile claims and all agent staff should act in a courteous and professional manner at all times. This expectation of staff is underpinned by the *Return to Work Act 2014* service standards.

What can't mobile claims staff do?

Mobile claims staff cannot make a referral to a specialist or coordinate any medical reviews, unless this is for an independent review or permanent impairment assessment.

Mobile claims staff are not permitted to be present while a worker is being examined, treated or tested by their medical practitioner or where they are undergoing diagnostic examinations or tests required for treatment purposes. If the worker wants their claims manager to be present during such appointments, they must provide written consent using the ReturnToWorkSA consent form.

The medical practitioner will also need to agree for the mobile claims staff to be allowed to attend these types of appointments.

What can mobile claims staff request from a medical practitioner?

Relevant medical information can be requested from a treating medical practitioner which may be in the form of a telephone call, email, case conference, request for a medical report or treatment plan. Sometimes, clinical notes relating to the work illness or injury may also be requested.

This information sharing is crucial for the mobile claims staff to coordinate recovery activity, taking into consideration the treating medical practitioner's medical opinions.

What level of communication can be expected?

Mobile claims staff are expected to operate in a collaborative and transparent manner with treating medical practitioners. They should notify treating medical practitioners of any requirements or advise if further information is needed. They should also advise when an independent opinion is required and why, as often as possible.

Treating medical practitioners can assist by nominating their preferred method of contact and where appropriate, acknowledging requests or providing an estimated completion time for requested information.

Can an independent opinion be considered?

An independent medical opinion may be required if there are barriers affecting the injured worker's recovery and return to work, which may or may not be related to the injury.

An independent opinion may also be required if a diagnosis, cause of injury, prognosis or treatment plan is not clear, or to support return to work activities. Prior to this occurring, mobile claims staff consider all relevant information on file to ensure the information is not already available.

Where possible, mobile claims staff will attempt to obtain this information directly from the treating medical practitioner and communicate when this may not be possible.

Sometimes, an injured worker may ask their mobile claims manager for advice, guidance or another opinion and this may also be a cause for considering an independent opinion. There may be exclusions to these reasons; however, that should be only by exception.

What are the points of escalation?

If a treating medical practitioner wishes to raise a concern with mobile claims or agent staff, this can be undertaken by either speaking directly with them in the first instance, or escalating the concern with their direct manager.

Do mobile claims staff direct workers to other practitioners or book independent medical opinions (IME) for more favourable outcomes?

No. Sometimes a worker may ask their mobile claims manager if another opinion can be arranged.

They will do this on behalf of the worker to preserve the relationship between an injured worker and their treating medical practitioner.

An IME may also be requested if there is a breakdown in communication between the parties and medical information is not received in a timely manner, which impacts on the worker's recovery and return to work. An IME is never booked for the purpose of undermining the treating medical practitioner.

Do claims agents get paid for terminating a worker's entitlements?

No. Claims agents are incentivized for early, timely and sustainable return to work outcomes which are based on medical evidence and demonstrated ability.

Is it ok for mobile claims staff to discuss an injured worker's claim in the waiting room?

An injured worker may choose to discuss matters with their mobile claims manager whilst waiting for the medical practitioner, however it should never be the mobile claims staff who initiates this conversation. Mobile claims staff should always consider the surroundings and privacy of a worker when discussing sensitive or confidential information, however this does not mean that meetings at coffee shops or public places are inappropriate. A public location is often more convenient, safe and comfortable for all parties.

Should industrial issues be considered when certifying capacity?

Industrial issues should always be discussed with mobile claims staff to assist with addressing the barriers. However, when certifying capacity it is crucial that mobile claims staff understand what the injured worker is physically capable of undertaking or what restrictions should apply. An industrial issue should not equal no capacity.