

Work Transition Tips: For support groups & health care professionals – **Working together to provide worker friendly information** -

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“Support groups and health care providers can work together to help workers with injuries and their families find and use the information to live and work with newly exposed injuries and chronic disabilities”

Persons, who cannot work due to a work injury experience many challenges and losses. These include the loss of income, not knowing about their future health and the loss of routine ways of doing. Such losses are overwhelming. For workers it is challenging to find and understand new and unfamiliar information about their injury. It is also difficult to meet all of the expectations such as what to do about their claim and communicate with health

care professionals and insurers in the recovery and return to work processes.

Accessing and using knowledge is important for workers with injuries to become informed about their health status, their rights and the rules about getting back to work – Unfortunately it is not easy for workers to find or put all of the information they need together. Many of the people who can provide information do not talk with each other and they are

not fully aware of the needs of workers with injuries.

What is needed is training for support groups and health care professionals on the best ways to share and exchange information with workers. More awareness and teamwork among everyone will make it easier for workers to access the right information, make informed decisions, as well as assist workers to understand information they need for living and working with a disability.

Research^{1,2,3} suggests that:

- Support groups and health care professionals provide a source of information to workers with injuries and disabilities.
- Support groups and health care professionals are unaware of what each group can give to workers. They need to work together to help persons with disabilities and work injuries find, understand, and use information.
- Support groups and health care professionals need training and information on how to share and communicate information to workers so they can use it.
- Collaborative approaches are needed to help workers with injuries make immediate and long-term decisions about going back to work and adjusting activities in daily life.

Research indicates that the common difficulties members of support groups and health care professionals face in sharing information with workers are...

- Workers do not have the same ability or experience in finding and using information related to their injuries or health.
- Information that workers need is not easy to find and no help exists to make it easy for workers to understand new and unfamiliar information.

- Most workers try to find information on benefits, health, and insurance without help.
- Not all health care professionals share information with workers the same way.
- Support groups and health care professionals have little training on how to share information so that workers can apply it to their immediate and future needs.

What can support groups and health professionals do?

- **Contact local community agencies, support groups and labour representatives** to find out about locally available informational supports and services.
- **Contact health professionals** such as occupational health physicians or nurses, occupational, physical therapists, chiropractors, nutritionists, those in public health clinics, to find out the types of services they deliver and the type of information can provide.
- **Contact local insurance agencies** such as compensation boards and disability insurers to find out what information is available to workers.
- **Organize an educational session or workshop** with health professionals, community support groups and insurers to share knowledge on local services, supports and identify ways to collaborate within the local area.
- **Organize joint education sessions** for workers,
- **Organize an educational day** on how to share and transfer knowledge that help worker's with injuries and chronic disabilities and family members make sense of new information.

- Review *KIT-Tip Sheet 4-2010* on specific steps you can use to share information that is worker friendly and can help workers consider and use information.

Go to the CIWA website and watch the video on Support groups or talk with others on ways to share information with workers.

After reading this *KIT-Tip Sheet*, and /or *KIT-Tip 4-2010* as well as watching the videos at the CIWA website www.ciwa.ca consider these questions:

- How can we improve our efforts to work together to help workers get the information they need?
- What specifically can I use from this information tip sheet to improve my interactions with other community agencies and health care professionals to ensure that I know about and can share the best information with persons with chronic disabilities on the services and supports that exist in these areas?

Moving forward:

- Identify the steps you will take to share this with others, to change the way you share information with others, or to read more information on how to share and exchange information with others. practices.
- Make a list of the steps with a date/plan to implement it.
- Contact a support group or healthcare provider and exchange information about the services and supports you provide to workers.

CIWA invites you to look further:

If you found this *KIT-TIP* sheet useful or wish to have more information about the research and other resources to assist you in helping injured workers please contact CIWA by email at ciwa@vianet.ca

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