

Nurse Case Management



Criteria for Nurse Assignment

- At the time of case acceptance, the injured worker (IW) has not returned to regular duty on a full-time basis.
- IW is partially disabled, but the file does not contain work restrictions.
- The claims examiner (CE) requires information about continuing services such as home health care, housing modifications, surgery or additional physical therapy.



Criteria for Nurse Assignment

Although the ideal time for nurse intervention is from the date of injury through 120 days, the CE may refer a case for nurse intervention regardless of the time elapsed since the injury if:

- Medical evidence does not indicate a return to work (RTW) date.
- The RTW date exceeds usual disability for the condition.
- The RTW date is extended without clear medical rationale.

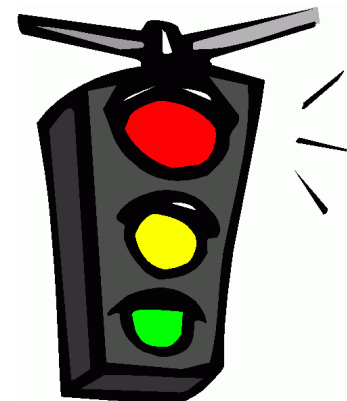
Basic Tasks of the Nurse

- Establish a supportive relationship with IW either telephonically or through face-to-face contact.
- Secure sufficient information about the condition and medical treatment plan to coordinate appropriate medical services which will expedite recovery.
- Assist the attending physician (AP) and IW in securing medical services for the work related condition in a timely manner.
- Monitor IW's medical condition and treatment provided.



Basic Tasks of the Nurse

- Assist IW in completing forms and securing information about medical services available and facilitating RTW.
- Assist IW and AP in obtaining medical authorizations and expansion of the claim to include additional diagnosis if appropriate.
- Encourage IW to cooperate with medical treatment and other efforts to prepare for RTW.
- Provide feedback regarding work restrictions to employing agency (EA) and verify work status.



Types of Nurses

- Staff Nurse Supervisor – Manages the Lead Nurse and the OWCP Staff Nurses nationwide.
- Lead Nurse – Conducts research and analysis to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the Nurse Program. Makes recommendations for Program improvements and participates in the development of policies and procedures for implementation, management, and evaluation of nursing services.
- Staff Nurse (SN) - Manages the contract nurses for OWCP.
- Continuation of Pay (COP) Nurse (CN) - Consists of telephone interaction only.
- Field Nurse (FN) - Assigned when disability has been identified. May be telephonic only based on the claimant's locale or severity of condition.
- Catastrophic Nurse Assignment - Complex and long term in nature. Often involves multiple medical or nursing facilities, and providers.
- Task Nurse Assignment - A specific assignment is identified for FN. Once completed, nurse will file a closure report.

Nurse Intervention with Rehabilitation Services

“Dual Tracking”:

- CE has the option to take a dual track intervention approach on certain cases. FN and a rehabilitation counselor (RC) may be assigned at the same time if there are specific and distinct goals for both.
- For example - FN works with AP to obtain maximum work tolerances; while RC is evaluating transferable skills or performing an ergonomic evaluation.



Field Nurse (FN)

- FN is a registered nurse who assists in the management of disability claims in a number of ways. Unlike CN, FN's contact is frequently in person with IW, EA, and medical providers. In some cases, however, FN's activity may be purely telephonic in nature due to lack of FNs in a certain area, or for other reasons.
- FNs provide case management services for 120 calendar days (can be extended on a case by case basis).
- FNs are instrumental in reducing lost production days (LPD) associated with a claim.
- Within a week of case assignment FN contacts EA, IW, and AP. Subsequently, FN contacts CE. FN reports back to CE all information obtained and recommends future case interventions based on the information received during these contacts.

Types of information obtained by FN

- Personal Information - identifies barriers to a successful RTW.
- Job History – outlines transferable skills and abilities, which may be used by EA to create a modified position.
- Medical History -- identifies other non-work conditions that may interfere with an immediate RTW to some form of gainful employment, and discussion of current treatment plan due to the work related injury.
- Nursing Care Plan – outlines potential problems, nurse recommendations, and nursing planned services for the next 30 days.

Nurse Intervention Process



During the first 30 days:

- FN determines whether AP has formulated a treatment plan and whether IW's physical condition is improving.
- Advises AP of the availability of light duty.
- Once a plan is formulated, FN monitors the physical progress of IW and obtains RTW date from AP.

Nurse Intervention Process

Contact with EA:

- FN may request to perform an onsite walk through IW's work environment to determine the extent (if any) the job may be modified to accommodate work restrictions.
- EA may also request this. This has proven valuable in returning IWs to light duty in a short period of time, thereby reducing the number of LPDs.

Nurse Intervention Process

- FN works with EA to ensure that the physical demands of the job are in keeping with any medical restrictions imposed by AP.
- To ensure that there are no significant barriers to RTW and verify that RTW occurs on or near the expected date; FN may request a RTW meeting with IW and supervisor to review work restrictions.



Nurse Reports

- Nurse Report is submitted to CE every 30 days.
- Nurse Report outlines the progress of IW's recovery, contacts with EA, CE, AP, and any obstacles that may delay RTW/recovery process.
- Nurse Report will outline any progress made with RTW in a light duty position and/or regular duty position.
- Nurse Report also contains any recommendations for future case intervention by CE.



Nurse Reports

- If IW does not RTW within 120 days of FN assignment, there is no significant improvement in the condition of IW, or AP does not provide a treatment plan, the intervention process may end.
- FN submits a final case closure report. CE will then formulate an appropriate plan for future case management.



Return to Work Monitoring

If IW is released to return to work, but does not RTW on the proposed scheduled date or remains at work less than 60 days, FN will evaluate the underlying reasons and report to CE.

Evaluation of reasons -

- If the reason is a job adjustment problem (difficulty with EA providing work within prescribed limitations), FN will notify CE.
- If medical conditions prevent or cut short RTW, FN will contact the physician for new restrictions and discuss the issues with CE.
- If non-cooperation with FN is an obstacle to a successful RTW, FN will notify CE via e-mail, telephone call, or an Interim Nurse Report.

Extension of Nurse Assignment

- Extensions of 30-60 additional days may be necessary in some cases with the approval of the CE:
 - to help IW reach a higher level of physical capacity, resulting (if possible) in return to date-of-injury job
 - if work related surgery is necessary
 - to ensure that initial RTW is successful
 - A follow-up review is then undertaken after the extension period has ended. As long as the file supports continued intervention, CE can extend FN intervention period for up to 180 days.



Extension of Nurse Assignment

- In catastrophic cases, when it is clear that FN services would be useful for a specific purpose, or it is clear that IW will RTW within a short period of time, the intervention process may extend beyond the 180-day limit.
- However, any extension beyond 180 days is done only with Supervisory approval. The only exception is an automatic extension provided for an initial return to work monitoring period of 30 days for regular full duty (or 60 days for light duty).

Injured Worker's Responsibilities

- To provide a medical release allowing FN access to medical information related to the on-the-job injury.
- To effectively communicate with FN.
- To coordinate communication between FN and AP.



Agency Responsibilities

- To effectively communicate with the nurses in all phases of the assigned intervention, during the process and after RTW.
- To allow access to IW's worksite.
- To provide accommodation and modification of job duties when restrictions are presented.



Results

- Nurses establish a professional relationship with the IW's AP, which will be beneficial towards the goal of a successful RTW.
- Nurses are “foot soldiers” for EA and CE. Nurses coordinate, report, and assist in the medical management of cases. They are out in the field gathering information and medical evidence that will contribute to a successful RTW or an expedited medical recovery.
- IW has access to medical care and guidance needed to assist him/her with a successful medical recovery from the injury and an expedited RTW.

Results

- Communication lines are open to EA that will assist them in returning IW to work; thereby reducing LPDs.
- CE is able to take a proactive approach to medically manage cases.
- Long term benefits – EA has a healthy, productive employee back in the work force as well as a reduction of LPDs and a reduction in long-term compensation costs.



Questions

A nurse will be assigned to an OWCP case when:

- a) At the time of case acceptance, the injury worker has not returned to regular duty on a full-time basis.
- b) The injured worker is partially disabled, but the file does not contain work restrictions.
- c) The claims examiner requires information regarding home health care, housing modifications, and/or surgery.
- d) All of the above

Questions

All of the following are tasks of the nurse except:

- a) Assist the attending physician and injured worker in securing medical services.
- b) Issue a final decision on entitlement to medical benefits.
- c) Monitor the injured worker's medical condition.
- d) Establish a supportive relationship with the injured worker.
- e) Provide feedback regarding work restrictions to the employing agency.

Questions

A field nurse and a rehabilitation counselor may be assigned to a case at the same time?

- a) True
- b) False

Questions

Initial field nurse service is usually authorized for 120 calendar days. During that time they remain in contact with:

- a) The employing agency
- b) The injured worker
- c) The treating physician
- d) The claims examiner
- e) All of the above

Questions

The field nurse can perform an onsite walkthrough of the injured worker's work environment to determine the extent the job may be modified to accommodate work restrictions.

- a) True
- b) False

Questions

If an injured worker is released to work, but does not return to work on the proposed date or remains at work less than 60 days, the field nurse will evaluate the underlying reasons and report them to OWCP. In this situation, which are reasons a field nurse usually contacts a claims examiner:

- a) If the reason involves difficulty by the employing agency in providing work within prescribed limitations.
- b) If medical conditions prevent or cut short return to work.
- c) If non-cooperation with field nurse is an obstacle to a successful return to work.
- d) All of the above

Questions

An extension of field nurse services for 30-60 days may be necessary in the all the following situations except:

- a) To give the field nurse 60 extra days to complete their closure report.
- b) Help injured worker reach a higher level of physical activity.
- c) If work related surgery is necessary.
- d) To ensure that the initial return to work is successful.

Take Away Tips

- 1) Although the ideal time for nurse intervention is from the date of injury through 120 days, OWCP may refer a case for nurse intervention regardless of the time elapsed since the injury if medical evidence does not indicate a RTW date; the RTW date exceeds usual disability for the condition; and/or the RTW date is extended without clear medical rationale.
- 2) The nurse with establish a supportive relationship with injured worker, the treating physician, and the employing agency either telephonically or through face-to-face contact.
- 3) The claims examiner has the option to take a dual track intervention approach on certain cases. A field nurse and a rehabilitation counselor may be assigned at the same time if there are specific and distinct goals for both.

Take Away Tips

- 4) Within a week of case assignment the field nurse contacts the employing agency, injured worker, and treating physician. Subsequently, the field nurse reports back to CE all information obtained and recommends future case interventions based on the information received during these contacts.
- 5) The field nurse works with employing agency to ensure that the physical demands of the job are in keeping with any medical restrictions imposed by attending physician.
- 6) A nurse report is submitted to the claims examiner every 30 days. It outlines the progress of the injured worker's recovery, contacts with the employing agency, claims examiner, attending physician, and any obstacles that may delay RTW/recovery process.

Take Away Tips

- 7) If the injured worker is released to return to work, but does not return to work on the proposed scheduled date or remains at work less than 60 days, the field nurse will evaluate the underlying reasons and report to the claims examiner.
- 8) Extensions of 30-60 additional days may be necessary in some cases with the approval of the claims examiner.
- 9) Nurses coordinate, report, and assist in the medical management of cases. They are out in the field gathering information and medical evidence that will contribute to a successful RTW or an expedited medical recovery.