

Occupational Injury Service (OIS)

# Employer OIS Guide

*STAY* in the  
**GAME**



Workers'  
Compensation  
Board

Alberta

Our vision, ***Albertans working – a safe, healthy and strong Alberta***, is about reducing the impact a work related injury or illness has on your worker, their family, and you as their employer.

Occupational Injury Services (OIS) is a service designed to aid you in helping injured workers return to work as quickly and safely as possible. OIS achieves this by:

- ***Offering quick access*** to a facility staffed by physicians and chiropractors experienced in the assessment, treatment and rehabilitation of injured workers.
- ***Providing clinical staff*** that are familiar with your work environment and modified work opportunities.
- ***Fast tracking diagnostic and treatment services*** by referring directly to WCB authorized health care providers.
- ***Coordinating assessment and treatment communication*** between you, your worker, WCB and family physicians.
- ***Coordinating safe, sustainable return to work*** via development of modified work care plans.
- ***Educating*** you and your worker on injury prevention, injury management and return-to-work planning.
- ***Delivering high levels of customer service*** with positive outcomes.

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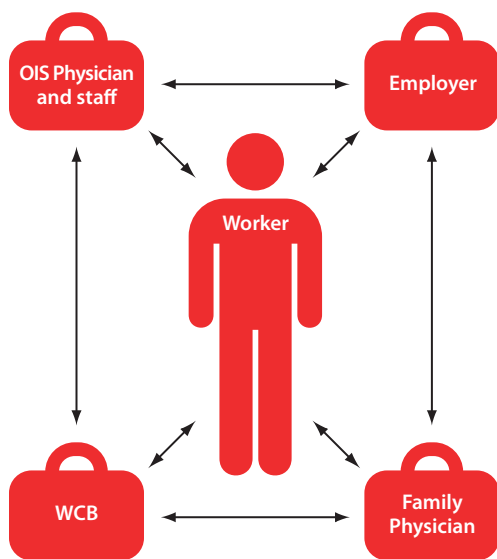
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# What is Occupational Injury Service (OIS)?

*OIS: getting the right medical care at the right time with the right results – safe, sustainable return to work.*

## Goal:

Provide best practice medical interventions and facilitate disability management communication among return-to-work stakeholders to support safe and sustainable return to work for injured workers.



## What is an OIS clinic?

A medical clinic that's been granted OIS status by the Worker's Compensation Board - Alberta. They applied for and met all the quality requirements to deliver OIS. They are staffed with physicians, chiropractors, nurses and other rehabilitation staff with a background in occupational medicine and disability management. It's a clinic specifically for people who are hurt at work.

## Advantages:

- Keeps everyone in the loop and avoids delays in communication.
- Additional OIS disability management reports are completed with detailed physical work capabilities and limitations to help determine modified work opportunities and return-to-work dates.
- Reduces compensation costs because workers are treated earlier and safe return-to-work plans are identified.
- Skilled/productive workers are retained, eliminating the need to re-hire or train a replacement.
- Disability management expertise – helping identify modified work options.
- Expedited access to best practice medical interventions to help your injured worker recover quickly and safely, and ultimately return to work.
- Knowledge of employer site/operations/modified work/disability management practices helps physicians develop a practical return-to-work plan.
- Return-to-work plan development.

***Proven satisfaction with the service*** (injured workers, unions, employers). OIS has been available since 2004. Over 1,300 employers across the province have chosen to use OIS and have reported high levels of satisfaction with the service.

## Guiding principles

### ***Focus on timely, safe, sustainable return to work.***

The sooner your worker safely returns to work, the less impact on both the worker and worksite operations.

### ***Expedited medical/rehabilitation interventions.***

Timely and appropriate medical attention and rehabilitation interventions (if needed) will help your worker return to work sooner.

### ***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.***

#### **What is modified work?**

Temporary modified work includes any changes to regular job duties, as a result of an injury. This includes changes in:

- tasks or functions
- workload (e.g. hours or schedules)
- environment or work area
- equipment

It can also include:

- work normally performed by others
- work specifically designated as a modified work program

#### **Why offer modified work?**

- retain an experienced worker
- decrease your worker's time away from work
- strengthen worker relations by showing an injury doesn't threaten job security
- boost worker morale
- maintain a reputation as a supportive employer
- increase the worker's independence
- reduce any additional hiring or training costs
- reduce costs associated with claims

#### **What does modified work need to be?**

- *achievable* - given your worker's injury, are they able to physically do it
- *safe* - the modified work plan should not endanger your worker's recovery or safety or the safety of others
- *constructive* - the modified work plan should contribute to your worker's skill development and their return to full duties
- *productive* - your worker's modified duties should be meaningful to the organization

Early development of return-to-work plans that involve you, your worker, and the treatment team (OIS physician, etc.) promotes a timely and safe return to work while reducing the human and financial impact of the injury.

# Getting started:

## How do I sign up for OIS?

- Talk about OIS in your organization—ensure you can meet the obligations and that OIS is right for you (see the Role and Responsibility section on page 11).
- Complete the OIS sign up sheet (attached in your package and available at [www.wcb.ab.ca](http://www.wcb.ab.ca)) and fax it to 780-498-3998.
  - ~ Ensure you identify which OIS clinic you would like to attend for your OIS orientation. An OIS provider profile is attached and is also available at [www.wcb.ab.ca](http://www.wcb.ab.ca). Note that although the OIS service is standardized across providers, each provider has some differences (e.g. hours of operation, types of minor injuries that they can treat) so ensure that you read the provider summary.
  - ~ If you have more than one WCB account number or multiple sites, ensure that each site is signed up and identified. Signing up is a notification to OIS providers that you are part of the OIS process.
- The OIS provider you chose on the sign up sheet will contact you within two business days to set up an orientation time with you. 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 step is important in ensuring you fully understand how to access and implement OIS in your organization.
- The OIS provider will also schedule a time to come for a tour of your worksite. The intent of the tour is to gain an understanding of your operations, gather available physical job demands analysis information, understand your modified work opportunities and identify how to tailor OIS to best meet your needs. In most cases, it will be a disability management staff person from the OIS clinic (e.g. nurse, physical therapist) rather than the physician who will visit the worksite.
- Identify your specific internal process steps to access OIS in your organization (e.g. who do workers report to, etc.). Your OIS provider can assist you with this.
- Arrange information sessions for your workers and union representatives (if applicable) to orientate them to OIS. Again, your OIS provider can assist you with this (if needed).

# If a worker is injured:

## Call ahead

Contact the OIS clinic and speak to an OIS nurse. Describe the symptoms to ensure the injury does not require immediate emergency care. Notify the OIS clinic that you are sending a worker.

## Transport

Arrange transportation to the OIS clinic for your worker and, if possible, send a disability management staff member (e.g. supervisor) along with the worker.

- If you cannot send a staff member, give the OIS clinic a contact name and number to call to conduct the return-to-work conference over the phone.
- Remind your worker to bring their Alberta Health Care number if possible.

## Report

- Complete the Employers Report of Accident and forward it to WCB within 72 hours. This can be completed online at [www.wcb.ab.ca](http://www.wcb.ab.ca)
- Your worker will be given a Worker's Report of Accident (C060) to complete while they are at the OIS clinic. Encourage your worker to complete the report while they are at the clinic.

## Assessment

Your worker will be seen by an OIS physician who will conduct an assessment of the injury.

The OIS physician will:

- ask your worker to describe how they were injured
- conduct an exam of the injured body part
- talk to your worker about any medical treatment (e.g. x-ray, medications) or rehabilitation treatment (e.g. physical therapy, chiropractic, etc.) they may require
- talk to your worker about the need for follow-up with the OIS physician
- talk to your worker about the safest way to get them back to work
- answer questions your worker may have

## Participate in a case conference to develop a return-to-work plan

The OIS physician/staff member will privately meet with you and your worker (in person if you accompanied your worker to the OIS clinic or via phone) to talk about the best way to get your worker safely back to work.

They will talk about:

- duties that are safe for your worker to perform and the durations at which those duties can be performed until their injury resolves  
~ the OIS physician will document these duties in a document called a Work Readiness Report, and will give a copy to you and your worker
- modified work options
- how best to manage the injury and progress back to full duties

- any support that your worker may require at work

They will **not talk** about any confidential worker medical information such as the injury diagnosis or medical history.

The three of you will talk about and agree on a plan that will best help your worker to return to work safely while contributing to your work environment and operations.

The return-to-work case conference is critical in the development of a return-to-work plan that will work best for you and your worker. If you do not participate you can **negatively** impact the success of the return to work.

## Implement the return-to-work plan

- Depending on the severity of the injury, your worker will be instructed to return to work when it is medically safe to do so.
- Work with your worker to implement the return-to-work plan immediately (e.g. modified duties etc).
- Support any other recommended treatments (e.g. giving your worker time off to attend physical therapy or chiropractic services etc.).
- Support and encourage your worker to attend any follow-up visits until their injury resolves.



# OIS fees

The OIS fee is higher than the regular fee charged for a physician assessment. Visit [www.wcb.ab.ca](http://www.wcb.ab.ca) for the current fee. When your worker visits an OIS clinic, the OIS fee is charged to the claim rather than the regular physician fee.

## What does the extra fee pay for?

- Orientation from an OIS clinic and assistance with setting up the OIS process in your organization.
- A worksite visit from an OIS clinic to obtain knowledge of your worksite and gather modified work information.
- Experienced workplace injury physicians with an occupational medicine background and WCB training.
- Same day access to a physician (on average within 30 minutes).
- Same day completion and submission of WCB reports.
- Completion of additional disability management reports
  - ~ Work Readiness Report
  - ~ Early Intervention Report
- Worker and employer injury management education.
- Family physician contact to discuss treatment plan.
- Identification and coordination of required medical and rehabilitation treatments.
- Development of safe and effective return-to-work plan.
- Case conference to discuss return to work issues.
- Availability for follow-up questions/advice.
- An expert return-to-work coach – a medical professional trained to understand workplace injuries and job demands.

- Advice on preventing injury and re-injury.
- Timely access to diagnostics (e.g. MRI, CT and bone scans), specialists and surgical procedures, and other rehabilitation services (e.g. physical therapy, chiropractic, etc.).

## Is OIS value added?

OIS has been in place since 2004. Statistics show that the up front investment in best practice disability management pays off in the long term. The focus on expedited access to medical treatments, diagnostics and modified work translates into less cases where workers are waiting for services while they collect full wage replacement. On average we see quicker return to work and lower claim costs when workers access OIS.

### Workers who attend OIS spend less time off work

- Pre enrollment – 19.3 days
- Post enrollment – 15.0 days

*\* Claim duration (lost time cases in first year 90 days post accident)*

### Workers who attend OIS have lower wage replacement costs

- Pre enrollment - \$525/claim
- Post enrollment - \$362/claim

*\* Compensation (all forms) in first 90 days post accident.*

### Workers who attend OIS have lower health care related costs

- Pre enrollment - \$813/claim
- Post enrollment - \$593/claim

*\* Health care costs (all types)*

*\* Q1 2009 data – Pre/post enrollment comparison for companies newly enrolled in October 2008*

# Implementing OIS in my organization:

## Success tips from OIS employers

- ✓ Integrate OIS into your organizations disability management vision, culture and existing processes.
- ✓ Work with your OIS provider to customize OIS to fit your organization, not the other way around.
- ✓ Appoint a staff member to drive the OIS process.
- ✓ Identify key organization change agents (e.g. union reps, safety committee members) and utilize them in the marketing process.
- ✓ Anticipate barriers and tailor your marketing strategy to mitigate them.
- ✓ 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 open and 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 your OIS team (worker, OIS physician, WCB) to resolve issues and make the process better.
- ✓ Use multiple methods to get the word out:
  - ~ information sessions
  - ~ written information/pamphlets
  - ~ posters
  - ~ organization newsletters
  - ~ standing item at safety committee meetings
  - ~ kick off meetings
  - ~ new employee orientation
- ✓ Build on success—use real case testimonials as a marketing tool.
- ✓ Continually reinforce the OIS message and process.

## *Specific tips for a unionized environment:*

- ✓ Involve union representatives up front in the decision making process regarding OIS. The more they feel part of the process, the more they will participate in the process.
- ✓ Ask for assistance from your OIS provider and your WCB account manager to outline the benefits of OIS to workers and unions.
- ✓ Clearly communicate that OIS is a choice. It is not mandatory and participation or lack of participation will not impact a worker's job in any way. Share the benefits of using it.
- ✓ Have union representatives participate in the OIS orientation and worksite visit. Ask for their assistance in setting up and implementing the model in your organization. Their input can be valuable in setting up a process that will work best in your specific environment.
- ✓ Use union representatives as change agents in your organization. Ask them to participate in marketing OIS to workers or to play a specific role in the OIS process.
- ✓ Develop a forum for staff to provide feedback about the OIS and disability management process in your organization — the good and the bad. Utilize union representatives to assist you in refining and maintaining the process. Ask them to be part of the solution.

# Roles, rights and responsibilities

## *YOUR role and responsibilities as an employer*

### **Your role:**

*Actively participate and support your workers return-to-work process as a member of the return-to-work team.*

### **Your responsibilities:**

- Make a commitment to disability management and sign up for OIS.
  - Attend an OIS orientation at the clinic of your choice.
    - ~ **If you do not attend the orientation, you will not have the knowledge you need to get the best results out of OIS.**
  - Coordinate a worksite visit with the OIS provider and assist them in gathering Physical Job Demands Analysis information.
    - ~ **The more the OIS provider knows about your worksite and operations, the more they can tailor the return-to-work plan to get the best outcome.**
  - Have appropriate modified work available.
  - Emphasize to workers that OIS is a voluntary option for them to choose if they have a work related injury.
  - Develop and integrate an OIS process into your workplace.
- Send appropriate cases to OIS (cases likely to be work related in which your worker has not sought medical attention with another physician).
  - Contact the OIS clinic in advance to advise them an injured worker is on the way.
  - Provide transportation for the worker to the clinic.
  - Complete WCB reports within 72 hours.
  - Participate in the OIS assessment case conference with your worker to identify modified work opportunities and develop a return-to-work plan that works for all parties.
    - ~ In-person attendance will give you the best opportunity to actively participate in the case conference. If this is not possible, commit to a telephone conference.
    - ~ **If you do not attend you will not be able to provide input into the return to work plan.**
  - Support all worksite return-to-work plan interventions, including:
    - ~ modified work
    - ~ employee attendance at OIS follow-up visits and rehabilitation interventions (e.g. physical therapy, chiropractic, etc.)
  - Maintain good communication with the return-to-work team (worker, WCB, OIS clinic).

## WORKER'S *role, rights and responsibilities*

### Role:

*Actively participate in and manage their recovery and return-to-work process.*

### Rights:

- Choose their treating physician/ chiropractor for their work related injury—OIS is a **voluntary option**.
- Actively participate in their injury management and return-to-work process.
- Be treated with respect and dignity.
- Be informed of all matters relevant to their return to work.
- Be provided with modified work that is safe, suitable, meaningful and productive.
- Expect that their personal health information will be kept confidential.
- Refuse the modified work plan if it does not meet the requirements for suitable modified work.

### Responsibilities:

- Report their injury or illness immediately to their supervisor. Identify at that time if they would like to attend an OIS clinic for their injury.
- Report their injury or illness to WCB by completing the Workers Report of Injury (CO60). The OIS provider will have copies of the report and encourage workers to complete it.
- Attend the OIS clinic as soon as possible after their injury.
- Identify that they are an OIS client when they report to the clinic.
- Actively participate in their assessment and case conference when developing their return-to-work plan.
- Participate in the recommended treatment/ rehabilitation plan.
- Maintain regular contact with their return-to-work team (you as their employer, the OIS physician, and their WCB adjudicator or case manager).
- Decide who they will use for follow-up support. Their OIS physician or their family physician and notify both parties.

## YOUR OIS PROVIDER'S *role and responsibilities*

### **Role:**

*Provide expert medical care and development of your worker's return-to-work plan.*

### **Responsibilities:**

- Maintain quality staff with occupational medicine and disability management backgrounds.
- Maintain knowledge of WCB processes.
- Provide you with an orientation about the OIS process when you first sign up.
- Assist you in implementing the OIS process at your worksite.
- Conduct a worksite visit to gather available physical job demands information when you first sign up.
- Maintain knowledge of your worksite through frequent communication or additional worksite visits.
- Answer incoming calls from you quickly.
- Assist you and your worker with the completion of WCB reports of the incident.
- Aim to see workers within 30 minutes of their arrival at the OIS clinic (barring any emergency cases at the clinic).
- Conduct a complete assessment of your worker's injury.
- Educate you and your workers about injury prevention, injury management and return-to-work strategies.
- Expedite any diagnostic tests that your worker may require.
- Request any referrals to other rehabilitation services that your worker may require.
- Develop an individualized return-to-work plan with you and your worker.
- Complete all OIS reports in a timely manner.
- Facilitate the return-to-work plan case conference and discuss the return to work plan with you and your worker.
- Provide follow-up visits and support to you and your worker as needed.

## WCB'S role and responsibilities

### **Role:**

*Support development and implementation of the return-to-work plan.*

### **Responsibilities:**

- Identify and designate new OIS facilities.
- Provide training to all OIS physicians and staff regarding WCB processes.
- Provide quality assurance on all OIS clinics.
- Ensure clinics are meeting their contracted expectations and respond to service concerns from stakeholders.
- Process and manage all claims submitted.
- Actively support the return to work plan by coordinating all needed rehabilitation services.

# Frequently asked questions

**Q: What is different about OIS versus the family physician route?**

**A:** The table below outlines some of the major differences between the two options.

	<b>Family Physician</b>	<b>OIS</b>
<b>Background</b>	General medicine	General medicine + occupational medicine
<b>WCB knowledge</b>	Limited	High – received specialized training
<b>Knowledge of your worksite</b>	Limited to none	Has background from worksite visit
<b>Access time</b>	Must call for appointment - days to weeks	30 minutes (on average)
<b>Ability to treat minor injuries (e.g. cuts requiring suturing)</b>	Unlikely	Yes
<b>WCB report completion</b>	No expectation – may take days	Same day
<b>Additional report outlining modified work opportunities</b>	No	Yes – Work Readiness Report
<b>Development of return-to-work plan</b>	May talk about return to work	Yes
<b>Participate in return-to-work conference with you</b>	No	Yes
<b>Expedite diagnostics</b>	No – will go into regular public queue	Yes
<b>Provision of follow-up support to employer</b>	No	Yes

**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: Can we use OIS for worker illness/non occupational injuries?**

**A:** No. OIS is a specific program designed only for work-related injuries.

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

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

**Q: How will I be notified of the modified work requirements?**

**A:** The OIS physician will complete a Work Readiness Report outlining your worker's abilities and restrictions. The OIS physician will discuss the report with you and your worker at the return to work case conference and will give you a copy at that time.

**Q: Can I change the modified duties myself?**

**A:** No. The scope of modified duties is based on a clinical assessment of the worker and their injury by the OIS physician. Only the OIS physician or another physician is qualified to alter the modified duty plan. Changing the duties without understanding the impact on the injury could increase recovery time or even re-injure your worker.

**Q: How long will it take from initial injury to full return to work?**

**A:** The time frame to full recovery is individual and depends on the type and severity of the injury. The OIS physician will give you an estimate for your individual worker at the time of the OIS assessment.

**Q: Do I, as the employer, have to participate in every return-to-work conference?**

**A:** Yes. The return-to-work conference is where the OIS physician will discuss the return-to-work plan. **If you do not attend you will not:**

- get direct information about the plan; or
- have the opportunity to provide input.

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

**A:** No. The 30 minute wait time is a target. There may be some instances where an emergency case comes into the OIS clinic that takes precedence or multiple OIS cases may come in at once. In most cases, the average wait time is no more than 30 minutes. In unusual cases it may be longer. However, even in those cases it is substantially shorter than an emergency room wait.

**Q: Can I direct my workers to attend an OIS clinic?**

**A:** No. OIS is an optional choice for a worker. The more you market the benefits of OIS, the more likely a worker will choose to attend.

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

**A:** Yes. When you sign up for OIS you may use any of the OIS providers across the province. However, to ensure the OIS provider has a good understanding of your operations, it is suggested that you contact each provider that you will use and have them come and conduct a worksite visit with you at your worksite.

Once your worker has attended a specific clinic for their assessment, they should stay with that clinic for the remainder of their care. It is not appropriate to go to multiple OIS clinics for “second opinions” as this will only serve to complicate the return-to-work plan. If you have concerns about a return-to-work plan, contact the OIS provider to discuss the issues with them.

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

**A:** If you participate in the Small Employer Experience Rating plan, costs are not a factor as it is the number of time lost claims that impacts your rate.

If you are participating in the Large Employer Experiencing Rating plan, the following costs are included in your experience rating:

- any no time lost claims with costs of \$1000 or greater,
- any lost time claims.

The costs for treatment through OIS clinics become part of the claim costs used in your experience. However, it is expected that by using these services, more effective treatment will produce better outcomes and ultimately reduce the cost of claims.

**Q: Can I still send my worker to OIS if they saw a physician in emergency or on the weekend when the OIS clinic was not open?**

**A:** Yes, if your worker agrees and the worker attends the OIS as soon as possible after the initial physician visit. Note that there will be two physician assessment fees, one from the emergency physician and one from the OIS provider. Notify the OIS provider of this type of referral so that they can communicate back to the first assessing physician to ensure they follow the return-to-work plan.

- OIS may not be used if your worker chooses to continue seeing the other physician.
- OIS may not be used to discount an assessment by another physician.

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

**A:** Contact the clinic manager of that site and voice your concerns. Give the provider a chance to respond, and be open to work with the provider on strategies to address the issue. If you feel the provider had not listened or responded to your concern, contact WCB’s consultant responsible for the OIS contract at 780-498-3219.

# Publications and resources

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

- [Employer handbook](#)
- [Employer OIS fact sheet](#)
- [Worker handbook](#)
- [Worker OIS fact sheet](#)
- [Back Active website](#)
- [Modified work toolkit brochure](#)
- [OIS provider profiles](#)
- [OIS fees](#)
- [Employer OIS poster](#)
- [Worker OIS poster](#)
- [OIS sign up sheet](#)
- [Work Readiness Report](#)

# How to reach us

*If you need more information or have questions about the OIS service, please contact WCB's Health Care Services 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)**

## Claims Contact Centre

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### Edmonton

#### Mailing

PO Box 2415  
Edmonton AB T5J 2S5

#### Inquiries

**Phone:** 780-498-3999  
**Fax:** 780-427-5863

#### Street address

9912-107 Street  
Edmonton, AB T5K 1G5

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### Calgary

#### Mailing

PO Box 2415  
Edmonton AB T5J 2S5

#### Inquiries

**Phone:** 403-517-6000  
**Fax:** 1-800-661-1993 (Toll-free in Alberta)

#### Street address

150, 4311-12 Street NE  
Calgary, AB T2E 4P9

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### Toll-free

#### Inquiries

**Inside Alberta:** 1-866-922-9221  
**Outside Alberta:** 1-800-661-9608  
**Fax inside Alberta:** 1-800-661-1993  
**Fax outside Alberta:** Not available—fax claims to 780-427-5863

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