

Occupational Injury Service (OIS)

# Worker 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 you, your family, and your employer.

Occupational Injury Services (OIS) is a service designed to help you return to a full and productive life as quickly and safely as possible after an injury. 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 employer, WCB and your family physician.
- ***Coordinating safe, sustainable return to work*** via development of modified work care plans.
- ***Educating*** you and your employer on injury prevention, injury management and return-to-work planning.
- ***Delivering high levels of customer service*** with positive outcomes.

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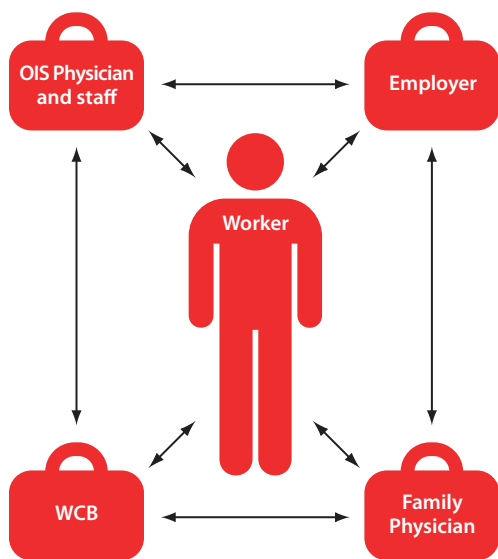
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# What is Occupational Injury Service (OIS)?

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

## Goal:

Facilitate safe, sustainable return to work for people who have suffered a work related injury by fostering communication between you, your employer, your health care provider and WCB.



## 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:

- You are provided with a choice of medical provider.
- You have more control over the management of your injury.
- You will get to see a physician within an average of 30 minutes (barring any emergencies in the clinic).
- You have access to an expert return to work coach—medical professionals trained to understand and deal with workplace injuries.
- Faster access to other services you may need, like x-rays, MRI's, etc.
- OIS keeps everyone in the loop and avoids delays in communication, ensuring you, your employer and physician are on the same page about your injury recovery.
- OIS promotes earlier, safe and sustainable return to work through a focus on modified work.
- Your injury is less likely to threaten job security or interrupt your wages.

***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 you safely return to work, the less impact on your work and home life.

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

The sooner you receive medical attention and rehabilitation treatment (if needed) after an injury, the sooner you can start on the road to recovery and return to work. Delays in seeking treatment for your injury can delay your recovery process.

### ***The best rehabilitation approach for most sprains and strains is staying active.***

The sooner you get moving, the sooner you will feel better. Even when you feel pain, you can still safely participate in activities.

### ***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 perform modified work?**

- recover sooner
- decrease your time away from work
- increase your independence
- continue to contribute to your organization's success

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

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

Early development of return-to-work plans that involve you, your employer, and your treatment team (OIS physician, etc.) ensures that you get the right service at the right time to promote safe, sustainable return to work.

# If you are injured:

If you suffer a minor injury such as a back strain or a minor cut that you believe is work related, you can choose to go to an OIS clinic for treatment.

- Your employer will arrange transportation to an OIS clinic, or hospital if you are severely injured. (e.g. severe bleeding, trouble breathing).
- Please remember, the OIS program is designed specifically for the assessment and treatment of work related injuries. If during an OIS assessment the physician determines that you have other non work related conditions (for example, a heart condition), you will be advised to make an appointment with your own family physician.

## Notify

- Report the injury to the staff person designated by your employer (e.g. supervisor, staff nurse).
- That person will contact the OIS clinic and speak to the OIS nurse to confirm that your injury does not require immediate emergency care. They will notify the OIS clinic that you are coming.

## Report

- When you arrive at the OIS clinic, report to the front reception area and inform them that you are **“an OIS client from Employer X”**.
- You will be fast tracked to be seen by the OIS physician within 30 minutes of your arrival (barring any emergency cases at the clinic) on average.
- You will be given a Worker’s Report of Accident (CO60) to complete while you are waiting. This report is required by WCB to process all claims. The OIS reception staff will fax the form to WCB for you and return the form to you. The sooner you complete this form, the sooner your claim will be processed.

## Assessment

You will be seen by an OIS physician at the clinic who will assess your injury. The OIS physician will:

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

## Have a case conference to develop a return-to-work plan

The OIS physician/staff member will meet with you and your employer representative privately (in person, if they accompanied you, or via phone) to talk about the best way to help you return to work safely.

They will talk about:

- tasks that are safe for you to perform at work and tasks you should not perform—the OIS physician will document these tasks in a document called a Work Readiness Report
- modified work options
- how best to manage your injury and progress back to full duties
- any support that you may require at work

They will **not** talk about:

- your injury diagnosis
- your medical history or any other personal information

The three of you will talk about and agree on a plan that will best support your safe return to work and resolve your injury.

## Implement return-to-work plan

- You will be instructed to return to work as soon as it is medically safe to do so. Your expected return to work date will be detailed in your return-to-work plan. This will keep you as an active member of your workplace while your injury heals.
- Work with your employer to implement the return-to-work plan (e.g. modified duties etc.).
- Implement any other recommended treatments (e.g. stretches at work, home exercise program, attending physical therapy or chiropractic services).
- Attend all follow-up visits until your injury resolves.



# Roles, rights and responsibilities

## *YOUR* role, rights and responsibilities

### **Your role:**

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

### **Your rights:**

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

### **Your responsibilities:**

- Report your injury or illness immediately to your supervisor. Identify at that time if you would like to visit an OIS clinic for your injury.
- Report the injury or illness to WCB by completing the Workers Report of Injury (CO60). Your OIS provider will have copies of the report for you.
- Attend the OIS clinic as soon as possible after your injury.
- Identify that you are an OIS client when you arrive at the clinic.
- Actively participate in your assessment. The more information you give the OIS physician about how you were injured, the better your recovery plan.
- Actively participate in the development of your return-to-work plan during the post assessment conference. This is your chance to develop a plan that works for you.
- Participate in the recommended treatment/ rehabilitation plan. Take charge of your recovery process and the outcome.
- Maintain regular contact with your return-to-work team (your employer, your OIS physician, and your WCB adjudicator or case manager). If they don't know you are having problems, they cannot help you.
- Decide who you will utilize for follow-up support—your OIS physician or your family physician and notify both parties.

## YOUR EMPLOYER'S *role and responsibilities*

### **Role:**

*Actively support your return-to-work process as a member of your return-to-work team.*

### **Responsibilities:**

- Have appropriate modified work.
- Educate all employees about OIS, and inform employees that it is a voluntary option for you if you have a work related injury.
- Contact the OIS clinic in advance to advise them that you are on your way.
- Provide your transportation to the clinic.
- Complete WCB reports within 72 hours.
- Participate in the OIS assessment case conference to identify modified work opportunities for you and the best way to support your recovery.
- Accommodate the OIS within their disability management program (e.g. support the return-to-work plan).

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

### **Role:**

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

### **Responsibilities:**

- Maintain quality staff with occupational medicine and disability management backgrounds.
- Maintain knowledge of WCB processes.
- Provide an orientation to your employer about the OIS process when they first sign up.
- Assist your employer in implementing the OIS process at your worksite.
- Conduct a worksite visit and gather job information when your employer first signs up.
- Maintain knowledge of your worksite through frequent communication or additional worksite visits.
- Answer incoming calls from your employer immediately.
- Assist you and your employer to complete WCB reports of accident to expedite claim entitlement.
- Target to see you within 30 minutes (on average) of your arrival at the OIS clinic (barring any emergency cases at the clinic).
- Conduct a complete assessment of your injury.
- Educate you and your employer about injury prevention, injury management and return-to-work strategies.
- Expedite any diagnostic tests that you may require.
- Request any referrals to other rehabilitation services that you may require.
- Develop an individualized return-to-work plan with you and your employer.
- Complete all OIS reports in a timely manner.
- Facilitate the return-to-work plan case conference.
- Provide follow-up visits and support 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. WCB ensures clinics are meeting their contracted expectations and responds 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: Do I have to go to the OIS physician?**

**A:** No. OIS attendance is a voluntary option for injured workers.

**Q: Why would I go see an OIS physician instead of seeing my family physician?**

**A:** OIS physicians specialize in treating work related injuries. Your family physician specializes in your general health. OIS physicians have experience treating work related injuries, and can get you the services you need quickly, benefiting your recovery and return-to-work outcome.

**Q: Who does the OIS physician work for – are they “company physicians”?**

**A:** OIS physicians are not employed by your employer or WCB. They work for private companies who have a contract with WCB to provide OIS services. As Alberta physicians, their practice is guided by the Alberta Medical Association, or if a chiropractor, by the Alberta College and Association of Chiropractors.

**Q: Isn't it better that I just go home and rest after an injury rather than doing modified work?**

**A:** In general, staying active and working is better for your recovery process because you will retain the skills you had pre-injury and not become deconditioned. The OIS focus is about getting you back to work as safely as possible. Your OIS physician may suggest that you not work for a

period of time due to the nature of the injury.

However, once that is cleared, getting back to work as soon as possible will only aid you on your road to recovery. Your modified work program will be developed to ensure you are not doing any duties that it is unsafe for you to do (e.g. avoid lifting for a few weeks if you have a shoulder injury).

**Q: Can I follow-up with my own family physician?**

**A:** Yes. However, please see only **one physician** for your work related injury. If you do choose to attend an OIS clinic for your initial assessment and then decide to see your family physician afterward, we would ask that you inform both the OIS clinic and your family physician.

**Q: Can I start physical therapy on my own?**

**A:** Yes. In order for therapy to be approved by WCB, you must see a physician within five days of the physical therapy assessment. Your OIS physician will tell you if you require physical therapy to support injury recovery. Tell the physical therapist that you are coming to them for a work related injury and share your return-to-work plan so they can tailor their therapy to support your plan. The physical therapist can perform an assessment and first treatment immediately but then must wait to hear back from WCB as to whether your claim has been approved. Ensure that the physical therapy clinic is a WCB approved clinic. Visit [www.wcb.ab.ca](http://www.wcb.ab.ca) for a list of approved providers.

**Q: *Can I continue to see the OIS physician as my family physician after my injury is resolved?***

**A:** No. The OIS physician has specific expertise in work related injuries and that is their chosen scope of practice. If you do not have a family physician, visit [www.cpsa.ab.ca](http://www.cpsa.ab.ca) to conduct a search.

**Q: *Can my supervisor change my modified duties?***

**A:** No. Modifications to your return-to-work plan should only be directed from your OIS physician with your consultation.

**Q: *If I feel that my injury is better, can I follow up with the OIS physician sooner than my follow-up appointment?***

**A:** Yes. Contact your OIS provider and request an earlier appointment date.

**Q: *What if my supervisor feels that my work modifications are not appropriate?***

**A.** Your supervisor or other employer representative should have participated in the return-to-work conference. Your employer may have some valid comments about the modified work (e.g. it might impact other workers). The return-to-work conference is meant to be a brainstorming session on how to support your return to work. Take this opportunity to work with your employer and the OIS physician to develop a plan that works for all of you.

If your employer feels that the modified duties are not appropriate after the return to work conference, suggest that you contact the OIS physician for a follow-up call to discuss the return to work plan.

**Q: *How soon will I get paid by WCB?***

**A:** You should receive your first wage loss benefit cheque from WCB within 14 days of WCB registering your claim.

**Q: *What if my employer does not provide me with the recommended modified duties?***

**A:** Contact WCB if your injury is work related and your employer is unable or unwilling to accommodate your duties.

**Q: *What about my confidential health information?***

**A:** OIS physicians and staff are obligated to comply with all privacy legislation. The focus of the return-to-work conference and any communication (e.g. work readiness report) with your employer is about how your employer can support your return to work only. No personal medical information will be discussed. You will be present at the case conference and will receive a copy of the Work Readiness Report so you will be aware of what has been communicated.

# Publications and resources

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

- [Worker handbook](#)
- [Worker OIS fact sheet](#)
- [Back Active website](#)
- [Modified work toolkit](#)
- [OIS provider profiles](#)
- [Worker OIS poster](#)
- [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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