

Behavioral health solutions

With many workplace injuries, the psychological and emotional components can significantly impact the claim's progression and outcome. Our behavioral health solutions identify and address psychosocial barriers to help ease the return to work process and reduce litigation.

A unique role in the marketplace

Although case management has focused heavily on the physical aspect of recovery, mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression and stress, can drastically affect the employee's ability to return to work and the risk of litigation. A specialist who is trained in the management of psychiatric disorders and has experience teaching coping skills can help improve an injured employee's resiliency. The expertise required to fill this role differs significantly from the skills of a registered nurse.

Our behavioral health specialists can provide the expert assistance needed to help employees manage psychosocial concerns. They also serve as patient advocates, fostering a non-threatening, friendly and professional relationship. In this role, our behavioral health specialists can identify additional problems within a claim that may need to be addressed.

Behavioral health referral criteria

Behavioral health can make an impact on claims involving trauma, mass casualty and catastrophic incidents, assaults and robberies, or when psychosocial flags are noted on the file. Referrals can be made by the examiner, nurse case manager or client.

Psychosocial flags include:

- Stress related to family, finances or workplace conflicts
- Fear of returning to work and/or concern about a repeat injury
- History of drug/alcohol abuse
- Misuse or abuse of opioids

Tailored for injured employees

While many clients offer employee assistance programs (EAPs) to their employees, they are not geared toward workers' compensation and return to work issues. Our behavioral health specialists work closely with the employee to identify and address barriers within a claim and help facilitate a timely return to work.

Patient privacy and sensitivity regarding documentation

Psychosocial and mental health information is sensitive and will not be shared with the client. Sensitive information is shared with the examiner on a need to know basis.

Success stories

Helping employee return to work while coping with PTSD

Danielle is a retail store supervisor who was robbed at gunpoint and locked in the back room for several hours. She was treated for robbery-related shoulder and neck injuries. During the three months Danielle was off work, she developed symptoms consistent with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) including flashbacks of the robbery, poor sleep, severe anxiety, fear when leaving her house, and even the inability to drive near her work location. Her claims examiner referred her case to behavioral health services.

The behavioral health specialist reached out to Danielle and she agreed to discuss her difficulties with the prospect of returning to work. The specialist located a psychologist and psychiatrist who had experience with PTSD treatment and workers' compensation cases for Danielle. The behavioral health specialist consulted with her

treatment providers, and provided ongoing telephonic support and encouragement as she developed skills to cope with her PTSD and anxiety about returning to work. Within several weeks, she was able to return to work on a part-time basis and then gradually increased her hours to full duty within a month.

Making a plan to feel better and return to work

Hector, a health equipment technician at a dialysis center, sustained back and shoulder injuries while moving equipment at work. He underwent conservative treatment, including medications and physical therapy, but he lacked the motivation to follow through on his treatment recommendations. His claims examiner discovered that he was depressed, complained of poor sleep, and was having marital issues due to not working. The examiner made a referral for behavioral health services. A behavioral health specialist contacted him and discussed the impact of his injury on his overall marital and family dynamics. Hector took great pride in his work ethic and ability to provide for his family, but now felt dependent on his wife and children for day-to-day support. He feared that he would never be able to return to work and, if he did, he would be reinjured.

In a few phone consultations, the specialist helped Hector develop a plan to feel better that included following through on physical therapy and home exercises as outlined by his other treatment providers, offered tips and suggestions for communicating with his wife about her frustrations, and encouraged him to talk about his fears and anxiety about treatment and return to work. By the second week, the specialist worked closely with Hector to motivate him to return to work and take the steps necessary to make this happen. Hector's outlook on life improved significantly and he was able to return to work the following week.

About Careworks

At the heart of any organization are its people. When one of your employees is out of work for illness or injury, Careworks is there, ready to help them on their return to health, work and productivity. By providing the right care and coordination solutions — from clinical case management to networks and support — along with the best treatment and cost oversight, we're driving better outcomes for your injured workers. And that means better outcomes for you.

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