

Overview of Pilot Program on Early Occupational Therapy

February 2023

WorkplaceNL launched a pilot program in November 2021, to provide occupational therapy earlier, even before a claim was fully adjudicated. Dalhousie University also provided support by modifying screening assessment tools to be used by the providers involved in the pilot.

WorkplaceNL's Occupational Therapy consultant led an evaluation of 76 injured workers who were referred to the program within the first six months. Of the 76 assessed, 24 returned to work full-time and 29 returned to work in some capacity. Out of the 24 that returned full-time, 15 of those claims remained closed. Therefore, only 20 per cent (15/76) of those who completed the program returned to work with a full claim closure.

On February 15, 2023, notice was sent to the five occupational therapy providers, advising that the Early Occupational Therapy Pilot ended. Cooperation and participation from the providers in the pilot was much appreciated. Any remaining injured workers were supported to continue treatment without interruption.

As outlined in WorkplaceNL's 2023-25 Strategic Plan, Goal 2 is dedicated to addressing return to work and recovery from injury. The development of a range of interventions is underway, which may include early intervention models, similar to that tested with occupational therapy. The pilot provided valuable insight into future evaluation methodologies and referral criteria, to support outcomes of effective recovery from injury and return to work.