

Preferred Worker Program



The Preferred Worker Program is designed to encourage the re-employment of North Dakota's injured employees. It offers cost-saving incentives to participating employers and benefits for preferred workers.

To Participate in the Preferred Worker program (PWP)

1. An injured employee must register for the PWP and be approved by Workforce Safety & Insurance (WSI). Program decisions are not appealable.
2. If WSI approves an injured employee for the PWP, the preferred worker will receive an Identification (ID) Card. The preferred worker should have the ID card with them when performing work search.
3. If hired, the preferred worker may give the ID card to the employer to complete and return to WSI.
4. WSI will send a Preferred Worker Agreement to the employer. The employer and the preferred worker will review, sign, and return the agreement to WSI.
5. The application process is complete when WSI approves the agreement.
6. WSI will issue a new ID card to the preferred worker. If the preferred worker changes jobs, or obtains additional employment, they may present the new ID card to the new employer.



Preferred Worker Identification (ID) Card

Once approved, the injured employee receives this card to use when conducting all work searching.

Program Eligibility Employers

North Dakota Employers

To be eligible to participate in the PWP employers must:

- Be in good standing with WSI
- Have and maintain an account providing WSI coverage

Note: The employer of injury is eligible for program participation if the injured employee has returned to work in a permanent, alternate position. Alternate employment is a new position with pre-injury employer.

Out-of-State Employers

To be eligible to participate in the PWP, out-of-state employers must submit proof of workers' compensation insurance at the time the ID card is submitted.

Program Eligibility for Injured Employees

To be eligible to participate in the PWP, an injured employee must have:

- Sustained a compensable work injury in North Dakota, resulting in an inability to return to their pre-injury position
- Completed the vocational rehabilitation process
- Not released to pre-injury occupation
- Not refused an offer of appropriate employment with the employer of injury





Preferred Worker Benefits

Work Search Allowance

When the injured employee is eligible and actively searching for employment, a work search allowance will be provided in the amount of \$250. This allowance may be used for appropriate clothing for interviews, uniforms, travel expenses, or other needed items. Maximum benefit is \$250.

Certification, Licensure or Related Employment Costs

Costs for certification, licensure, or other testing required for employment may be reimbursed. This includes physical examinations or membership fees required for the job. Maximum benefit is \$2,000.

Moving Expenses

Relocation expenses to move the household to the locale where the injured employee has actually located work and the distance is equal to or greater than 35 miles from their primary residence. Moving expenses shall be paid in accordance with North Dakota Century Code § 65-05.1.

Reimbursement for Lodging, Meals and Travel Expenses Relating to On-The-Job Training

Upon WSI approval, the preferred worker or employer may be reimbursed for lodging, meals and travel expenses (public transportation or mileage) to attend required employment training. Reimbursement is paid at North Dakota's state rate at the time of travel.

Tools and Equipment

Upon WSI approval, the preferred worker or employer may be reimbursed for tools, equipment or starter sets mandatory for employment. Maximum benefit is \$2,500.

Job Analysis/Ergonomic Assessment

An on-site job analysis and/or ergonomic assessment may be conducted at no cost to the employer.

Worksite Modification Reimbursement

With WSI approval, costs for modifications necessary for employment or retraining may be covered.

Wage Reimbursement

WSI may reimburse the employer up to 50% of gross wages (not to exceed North Dakota's Average Weekly Wage) at the time of employment start date. The wage reimbursement period is 26 consecutive weeks. ***This benefit is not available to the employer of injury.***

If an employee has a catastrophic injury as defined in North Dakota Century Code § 65-05.1-06.1 (2) (1), reimbursement is 75% of gross wages for 52 consecutive weeks. ***This benefit is not available to the employer of injury.***

Premium Exemption

Employers may not be assessed premiums on a preferred worker's salary for 3 years from the date of hire. ***This benefit is not available to the employer of injury or out-of-state employers.***

Claim Cost Exemption

If the preferred worker sustains a new compensable injury during the 3 year premium exemption period, WSI may not charge the claim costs to the employer. ***This benefit is not available to the employer of injury or out-of-state employers.***

For More Information

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Visit Our Website

For additional information on the Preferred Worker Program at www.workforcesafety.com in the Return to Work section.