

# What is the Preferred Worker Program?

The Preferred Worker Program is a service of the Department of Labor & Industries (L&I). It offers financial incentives to employers who do either of the following:

- Hire workers who are able to work, but who cannot return to their old job because of a workplace injury or occupational disease.
- Re-employ workers with developmental disabilities following a workplace injury or occupational disease.

## I am a worker, how do I qualify?

If you have an open claim or a claim closed not more than 60 days ago for a work-related injury or disease, you may be eligible for preferred worker certification if you have:

- Permanent restrictions due to your work-related injury or disease that prevent you from returning to work with the same employer.

OR

- A developmental disability and you have been unable to work due to the work-related injury or disease for 14 or more days.

Ask your vocational counselor if you meet the criteria. If you do not have a vocational counselor, contact your claim manager or the Preferred Worker Program.



## Learn more:

Department of Labor & Industries  
Preferred Worker Program  
P.O. Box 44324  
Olympia WA 98504-4324

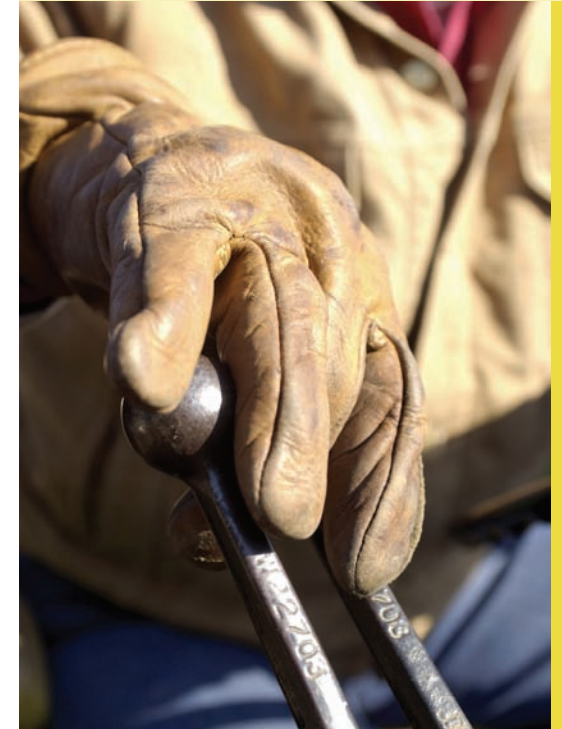
Telephone: 1-800-845-2634

On the Web:  
[PreferredWorker.Lni.wa.gov](http://PreferredWorker.Lni.wa.gov)

*Other formats for persons with disabilities are available on request. Call 1-800-547-8367. TDD users, call 360-902-5797. L&I is an equal opportunity employer.*

*To read this publication in Spanish, request F280-021-999 from your local L&I office. Check the government section or white pages of your telephone book for the phone number of the office nearest you.*

# Preferred Worker Program



- Financial incentives for participating employers
- New job opportunities for injured workers who qualify for "preferred worker" status

# What employers should know about the Preferred Worker Program

## What are the financial benefits for employers?

### **You receive financial protection against subsequent claims.**

- If you employ a preferred worker and he or she is injured on the job or is diagnosed with an occupational disease during the 36-month preferred worker certification period, L&I will pay the costs of the new claim with no direct cost or penalty to you.
- If you're an employer with industrial insurance coverage through L&I's State Fund, the costs for the new claim will not be charged against your account, and the new claim will not affect your experience rating.
- If you're a self-insured employer, L&I will reimburse the costs for that new claim after you close it, or on a quarterly basis, whichever occurs sooner.

### **If you're a State Fund employer, you also receive premium relief.**

You don't pay accident fund or medical aid premiums on the preferred worker. You and the preferred worker will pay only the supplemental pension premium. This premium relief stops at the end of the 36-month certification period, or if the preferred worker leaves your employment, whichever occurs first.

## How do I obtain benefits from the Preferred Worker Program?

- The person you hire must have a valid preferred worker certificate issued by L&I.
- You must be a subsequent or new employer. You cannot receive these benefits if you employed the worker when he or she suffered the work-related injury or was diagnosed with the occupational disease. Also, you are not eligible for these benefits if you are a chargeable employer under an occupational disease claim. (These limitations may not apply to workers who are developmentally disabled.)
- You must complete the two-page "Intent to Hire Preferred Worker" form (form number F280-010-000) and fax it to L&I at 360-902-6706 **OR** mail it to the address listed on the back of this brochure. (If you fax the form, do not mail it, too.)
- We will determine if you are eligible for preferred worker benefits when we receive your completed form.
- L&I must receive the completed "Intent to Hire Preferred Worker" form **within 60 days of the date of hire.**
- The job you offer must meet the worker's medical work restrictions.

## What happens if a preferred worker gets injured at work?

If a preferred worker is injured at work or is diagnosed with an occupational disease during the **36-month certification** you need to take certain steps.

### **For employers covered by L&I's State Fund:**

Indicate class code 7204 on the employer's section of the "Report of Industrial Injury or Occupational Disease." Alerting L&I that the claim involves a preferred worker prevents you from being charged claim costs. If you have questions, contact Employer Services at 360-902-4817.

### **For Self-insured employers:**

Manage the claim for a preferred worker and pay all benefits. When you are ready to close the claim, notify L&I's Self-insurance Section that the claim was for a preferred worker and request reimbursement of claim costs. If you have questions, contact the Self-insurance Section at 360-902-6901.

## What if a preferred worker leaves my employment?

If you terminate a preferred worker's employment, or the worker leaves before the 36-month certification ends, notify L&I of this in writing:

Department of Labor & Industries  
Employer Services  
P.O. Box 44144  
Olympia, WA 98504-4144

## Re-employment of a developmentally disabled worker

Effective January 15, 2005, you may be eligible for Preferred Worker benefits if you re-employ a worker who is developmentally disabled.

### **The worker must have:**

- Worked for you when he or she suffered the work-related injury or was diagnosed with the occupational disease.
- Missed at least 14 consecutive days of work due to the injury or disease.

### **You (the employer) must:**

- Show L&I any documentation you have pertaining to the worker's developmental disability.
- Complete the two-page "Intent to Hire Preferred Worker with Developmental Disabilities" form (form number F280-011-000) and fax it to L&I at 360-902-6706 **OR** mail it to the address listed on the back of this brochure. (If you fax the form, do not mail it, too.)

We will determine if you are eligible for preferred worker benefits when we receive your completed form.

- Submit the completed form to L&I within 60 days of the date of re-employment.
- Offer a job that meets the worker's medical work restrictions.

**IMPORTANT! A preferred worker is certified for a total of 36 months. Example: If an employer hires a newly certified worker for 12 months, and the worker changes employers, the second employer is eligible for benefits for only 24 months.**