Workers' Comp

Specialty Solutions Spotlight: Home Modifications in Workers' Compensation

September 13, 2023
4 MIN READ
Author profile image

Donita Stacker

Director, Operations

What should I consider when home modifications are needed for my injured employees?

The American Occupational Therapy Association defines home modifications as those that "adapt living spaces to increase usage, safety, security, and independence." Home modifications, which involve everything from installing railings, ramps, and high seat toilets to widening doorways to accommodate wheelchairs, are just some aspects of the benefits working with a knowledgeable home modification coordinator can provide to simplify this process.

When planning modifications, it's essential to understand the individual's needs. Apricus gives you access to trusted, skilled home modification coordinators, and will start by gathering high-level information from the injured employee and their family members to understand the patient's needs for managing daily activities. Seeing the space also helps answer numerous questions including the width of various doorways, the size of bathrooms, and how well the injured employee might be able to move from room to room.

An Apricus home modification coordinator can facilitate communication across all parties including the case manager, builder/contractor and the injured employee. They can also work with an occupational therapist who can play a critical role in helping identify the injured employee's needs and mapping out what interventions are most likely to be successful in meeting needed requirements. This is typically when the questions around a home modification start to become more detailed. These might include:

- **Are disabilities temporary, progressive or permanent?**
- **Does the injured employee rent or own?**
  If the injured employee is renting, a letter from the landlord permitting modifications to the home will be necessary. If the employee owns the home, it may be necessary to determine whether there are

any regulations from an entity such as a homeowners' association. A copy of the deed might also be required.

- **How many stories does the home have?**
  If it's more than one, does the injured employee need access to all floors? Will a stair lift, or an elevator be required?
- **How old is the home?**
  If it's older, wiring might be outdated or the structure itself might not be suitable for modification without expensive upgrades, which may need to be considered.
- **How many entrances does the home have?**
- **What limitations or special circumstances does the injured employee have?**
  For example, are there children in the home?
- **What equipment does the injured employee own?**
  It's wise to obtain any details about the type of equipment such as a power wheelchair, lift or bed and to factor the existing equipment into modification plans.
- **What equipment is planned?**
  As with existing equipment, it's wise to factor any planned equipment into the proposed modifications.

Relying on a home modification coordinator that has a network contractor capable of executing home modifications is important because they can also identify reputable occupational therapists and other experts within a region who can determine which modifications are necessary. Having experienced providers that are regularly evaluated in performing such work can help ensure changes to an injured employee's living environment are done correctly and in a timely manner to meet the goal of improving an injured employee's day-to-day ability to function.

Working with Apricus, you can also place confidence in a home modification coordinator to ensure the injured employee's needs are being met by the contractor across various touchpoints, obtain several quotes, check references to ensure the quality of the work, and work with several contractors to ensure an overall cost-effective modification is performed. In addition, you need cost transparency and may want estimates broken down by material and labor, to know project costs by room, and to know how much flooring costs. It's also important to realize throughout this process that the payer's role is to make modifications that accommodate the employee's injury, but at a level comparable to what was in place before the modification.

There are so many practical considerations around home modifications that it might be easy to lose sight of the injured employee. But it's essential that the individual's needs and desires are considered. Injured employees who feel they are a part of the process are more likely to believe the resulting alterations will enable their activities of daily living. That resulting sense of self-sufficiency can help drive better injury outcomes.

Home modifications have the ability to improve the lives of injured employees in a wide variety of ways including improving mobility, preventing additional injury and promoting rehabilitation. Taking advantage of a specialized Apricus home modification coordinator to facilitate this increases case efficiency and overall program savings because they contract with a broad range of cost-effective local and national home modification partners that cover many specialties. While home modifications may not occur routinely, we can provide you with vital access to a specialized coordinator you can trust with these complex cases.

This information is meant to serve as a general overview, and any specific questions should be fully reviewed with a health care professional or specialty service provider.

To make a referral for this service and others, call us today at 877.203.9899 or send an email to referrals@apricusinc.com.



©2022 Enlyte Group, LLC.

mitchell | genex | coventry