Workers' Comp

Specialty Solutions Spotlight: Transportation Services in Workers' Comp

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How are transportation services utilized in workers' comp and why are they important to an injured employee's recovery?

Consider what might happen if an injured employee confined to a wheelchair was forced to arrange his/her own ride to the doctor's office or transportation to work during a period of transitional duty. Would a private driver's car have adequate trunk space to safely store the wheelchair without damaging it? Would the driver know how to collapse the wheelchair for storage or how to assist the passenger?

These concerns extend beyond the need to safely stow durable medical equipment such as walkers and wheelchairs or even how to safely help riders. The drivers must also consider the often-unique needs of injured employees. Maybe someone needs a bit more time to get down to the street from an apartment. Or perhaps a person seemingly able-bodied requires a bit of assistance to lift a bag into a vehicle. These scenarios might fall outside what a taxi driver or a gig worker for a ride hailing company might expect to handle.

On an average day, Apricus arranges hundreds of rides for injured employees, typically to appointments such as doctor visits relating to an injury. If an injured employee requires more complex transportation, Apricus can also schedule ambulance, wheelchair, stretcher, basic life support and advanced life support transportation. Some services also schedule all aspects of medical flights.

In addition to safety, specialty solutions drivers must consider the unique needs of injured employees and be experienced in getting them where they need to go.

It's important to make sure injured employees have access to the most appropriate transportation to meet their needs. This series of questions can help uncover what challenges the employee might be facing that would need to be addressed.

- What type of transportation is required?
- What date and time does the person need to be picked up?
- What is the scheduled appointment time?
- What is the location of the pickup and/or drop-off?
- What is the destination? If it's a facility, what are the details such as the name, location and phone number?

Knowing as much as possible about a situation and needs makes it possible to line up the most logical transportation option. In addition, Apricus regularly reassesses what we are doing and how we are doing it, routinely meeting with vendors to obtain status updates, to gather and offer feedback, and conduct roundtable reviews.

In the current landscape, many might think rising gas prices and vehicle shortages would be having the greatest impact on medical transportation services, but the real impact is being felt through driver shortages. With the demand rising, shrinking transportation service providers are inclined to require higher fees or prioritize more lucrative trips. This is further impacted by the fact that workers' compensation is often dealing with fee schedules in association with these services, which provide lower payments than others offer.

In fact, drivers are cancelling confirmed trips because they are being offered alternative trips for considerably more money. This trend can cause delays in recovery time if needed health care services are not achieved in a timely manner, which can translate into longer open claims, higher costs, dissatisfied injured employees and compromised outcomes.

To combat this, we are analyzing data and engaging with national transportation networks regularly to understand each vendor's particular circumstances and determine what they are experiencing and in which regions of the country to mitigate for them wherever possible. For example, by finding ways to incentivize drivers by not passing costs along to them and encouraging them to see the benefit of participating fully in our program. These types of engagement give specialty providers a leg up in meeting injured employee transportation needs regardless of shortages.

Injured employees can benefit in surprising ways when they have access to professional transportation companies experienced in workers' compensation. For example, many services allow injured employees to request drivers with whom they've ridden in the past. This extra comfort, though modest in the overall recovery, can have a huge impact given that we know the foundational role that trust plays in the trajectory of an injured employee's recovery and in the associated costs.

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.

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