

Oregon Workers' Compensation

Topic of Interest

Preferred Worker Program _____

The State of Oregon Preferred Worker Program encourages the re-employment of qualified Oregon workers who have permanent disabilities from on-the-job injuries and who are not able to return to their regular employment because of those injuries. The program is funded by worker and employer contributions to the Workers' Benefit Fund. Preferred workers can offer cost-saving options to Oregon employers who hire them.

Eligible employers

Employers must maintain Oregon workers' compensation insurance and comply with the Oregon workers' compensation law.

Eligible workers

Workers must have permanent disability as a result of a disabling compensable injury or disease sustained on the job in Oregon and must not be released for regular employment.

Major program benefits

Premium exemption: An employer does not pay workers' compensation insurance premiums or premium assessments on a preferred worker for three years from the date of hire or date of eligibility.

Claim cost reimbursement: This protects the employer from the costs of a new workers' compensation claim if the preferred worker files during the premium exemption period.

Wage subsidy: The employer receives 50 percent wage reimbursement for the preferred worker for 183 days. Wage subsidy may be used one time each with two different employers or twice with the same employer for two different jobs.

Employment purchases: Assistance necessary for a worker to find, accept, or retain employment in Oregon:

- **Tuition, books, and fees** for instruction to update existing skills (\$1,000 maximum reimbursement).
- **Temporary lodging, meals, and mileage** to attend instruction when overnight travel is required (\$500 maximum expenditure).
- **Tools and equipment** mandatory for employment (\$2,500 maximum expenditure).
- **Clothing** required for the job (\$400 maximum expenditure).
- **Moving expenses** for a job in Oregon if the new worksite is more than 50 miles from the worker's primary residence.
- **Initiation fees, or back dues and one month's current dues**, required by a labor union.
- **Occupational certification, licenses, and related testing costs** (\$500 maximum expenditure).
- **Worksite creation** costs that occur with creating a new job for a preferred worker (\$5,000 maximum expenditure). All items purchased in this category belong to the employer.
- **Placement assistance** provided by a public or private agency that provides placement services, that resulted in employment that the preferred worker retained for at least 90 days. (Maximum \$2000 expenditure).

- **Miscellaneous** purchases that don't fit in any other categories but are necessary for the preferred worker to find, accept, or retain employment in Oregon (\$2,500 maximum expenditure per claim opening).

Worksite modification: Modifications can include tools, equipment, and worksite redesign needed to overcome injury-caused permanent limitations so the worker can do the job. They may be used once with one employer and once with a second employer or twice with the same employer if there is a job change. Modifications are limited to a maximum of \$25,000 on the claim that qualified the worker for assistance.

For more information contact:

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Medford: Toll-free 800-696-7161; 541-776-6032

Find “Return to Work” and “Preferred Worker Job Match” on our Web site at:

<http://www.oregonpwp.info>