

Division Accomplishments in Fiscal Year 2000

In order to accomplish its mission, the Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC) has defined five goals that guide the strategies it implements and decisions about allocation of scarce resources. Division accomplishments are best understood in the context of these goals, which are listed below:

- Accessibility to customers, suppliers and process partners to inform and remove barriers that inhibit the self-execution of the system
- Efficient and effective operations
- Accurate benefit payments and appropriate and timely services to injured workers
- Return of injured workers to gainful employment
- Equitable distribution of cost to ensure a viable workers' compensation marketplace

Accessibility to Customers, Suppliers and Process Partners to Inform and Remove Barriers that Inhibit the Self-execution of the System

■ In response to customer requests, the following division documents are now available on the Internet: a list of all insurance carriers providing workers' compensation coverage and their addresses, the division's audit policies, all research publications, exemption application forms, and the hospital reimbursement manual (avoiding \$29,000 in printing and mailing costs). A website search engine is another feature added to assist customers in locating information.

■ Despite an active educational program, many system participants have remained unaware of the division and its services to customers. To rectify this situation, the division is mounting an aggressive promotional effort. A first step was the development of public service announcements (PSAs) to be aired on television stations throughout the state. The first PSA was seen by 452,000 viewers in Tallahassee in March 2000 and by 221,000 viewers in Orlando in May 2000.

■ One thousand and fifty recently injured workers responded to a detailed telephone survey, providing the division with important information about injured workers' experiences with service providers and about the consequences of their workplace injuries.

Efficient and Effective Operations

■ The employee assistance program has been modified by decreasing the amount of staff time devoted to the ineffective process of investigating every Request for Assistance (RFA) and increasing the proportion of staff time devoted to the Early Intervention Program. If an insurance carrier shows an interest in investigating and resolving issues on RFAs, EAO staff facilitates that process. Efforts of EAO associates are directed toward preventing disputes by calling injured workers shortly after their injury.

■ Forty-seven employer and insurance carrier partners submit First Reports of Injury or Illness within a few days of the workplace injury. As a result

of 28,233 early notices, the division had personal contact with 5,002 injured workers. Preliminary results of the Early Intervention Program (EIP) indicate that just 6.5% of contacted cases submitted petitions for benefits, compared to 12% of non-contacted injured workers. (See Chapter 1 for a comprehensive description and analysis of the EIP.)

■ EAO's Early Intervention Pilot project won a Sterling Quality Achievement Award from the Florida Sterling Council for its innovative strategies involving employers, carriers, and third-party administrators as partners in the early intervention process.

■ In an attempt to reduce the liabilities of the Special Disability Trust Fund (SDTF) through case closure, the division has approached insurance carriers about closing inactive cases and settling active ones. Insurance carriers have agreed to close 551 cases, while final settlement is being pursued for 119 cases. These settlements and case closures eliminate a portion of the potential financial drain on the SDTF.

■ By the end of the fiscal year, all exemption applications were being processed within 30 days of receipt.

■ The division's integrated data system is now in production. This system allows associates to access all information about a particular workers' compensation injury while providing customer assistance regarding that case.

Accurate Benefit Payments and Appropriate and Timely Services to Injured Workers

■ To ensure that injured workers employed by self-insured employers receive appropriate benefits even if their employer goes bankrupt, security deposits for these employers have been gradually in-

creased. From January 1997 to the end of fiscal year 2000, security deposits rose by \$106,808,730, an average increase of \$1,695,377 for 63 employers.

■ The number of injured workers receiving Permanent Total supplemental benefits from the division through electronic transfer of funds has increased each year (see figure below). By January of fiscal year 2000, 46% of recipients received these payments electronically.

■ Workers' compensation coverage was extended to 13,174 employees as a result of the division's compliance efforts. A total of \$21,655,925 in additional premium was generated through the division's compliance efforts.

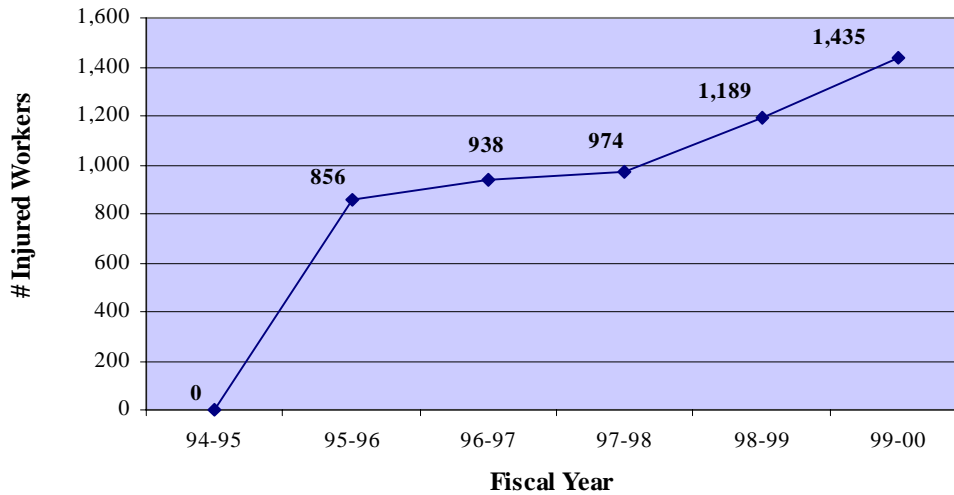
Return of Injured Workers to Gainful Employment

■ As a result of proactive efforts to provide services to injured workers earlier and to work with potential employers, 84% of cases closed this fiscal year that received re-employment services returned to work. This is an improvement of 12 percentage points over last year's results and represents an increase of 331 workers returning to work.

■ The results of a pilot demonstration project in the Miami-Dade area over the past few years show increased annual earning capacity of 46 injured workers to be \$354,225 with additional earnings of \$95,707 due to earlier than expected return to work. The pilot project achieved these successes by providing employment skills training shortly after injured workers attended orientation sessions. As a result, many of them attained re-employment without requiring the division to provide costly evaluation and re-employment services. This pilot project methodology will be implemented statewide to improve earnings of injured workers.

Figure A2.1

**Number of Injured Workers Receiving Permanent Total Supplemental Benefits Electronically from DWC
(as of June of each Fiscal Year)**



Source: Bureau of Operations Support, Division of Workers' Compensation

Equitable Distribution of Cost to Ensure a Viable Workers' Compensation Marketplace

■ The division conducted 36,539 employer investigations to determine compliance with coverage requirements.

■ The division issued 1,264 Stop Work Orders to employers found to be out of compliance with workers' compensation coverage requirements. These stop work orders were instrumental in obtaining coverage for the 13,174 workers mentioned above.

■ A total of \$21,655,925 in additional premium was generated through the division's compliance efforts.