



Occupational and
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Medicine

Engaging with the WSIB/ Insurance Systems Part 2

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Faculty/Presenter Disclosure

- **Faculty:** Aaron Thompson MD MPH FRCPC
- **Relationships with financial sponsors:**
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Occupational Medicine Physician, Canada Post Corporation
 - **Patents:** None
 - **Other:** Associate Professor, Temerty Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto
Staff Physician, Division of Occupational Medicine, Dept. Medicine, SMH
Chief Medical Officer, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB)

Disclosure of Financial Support

- **This program has received financial support from the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) in the form of an educational grant.**
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- **Potential for conflict(s) of interest:**
 - None

Mitigating Potential Bias

- The information presented in this program is based on recent information that is explicitly “evidence-based”.
- This Program and its material is peer reviewed and all the recommendations involving clinical medicine are based on evidence that is accepted within the profession; and all scientific research referred to, reported, or used in this CME/CPD activity in support or justification of patient care recommendations conforms to the generally accepted standards



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Feedback from prior sessions – Topics people would like to be further addressed

- “Are there options to refer to specialists for other opinions about treatment? Sometimes patients don't get the treatment they need right away; surgery or specialist “
- “What happens when an employee is injured permanently and can not return to previous role, workplace accommodation lasts years?”



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Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

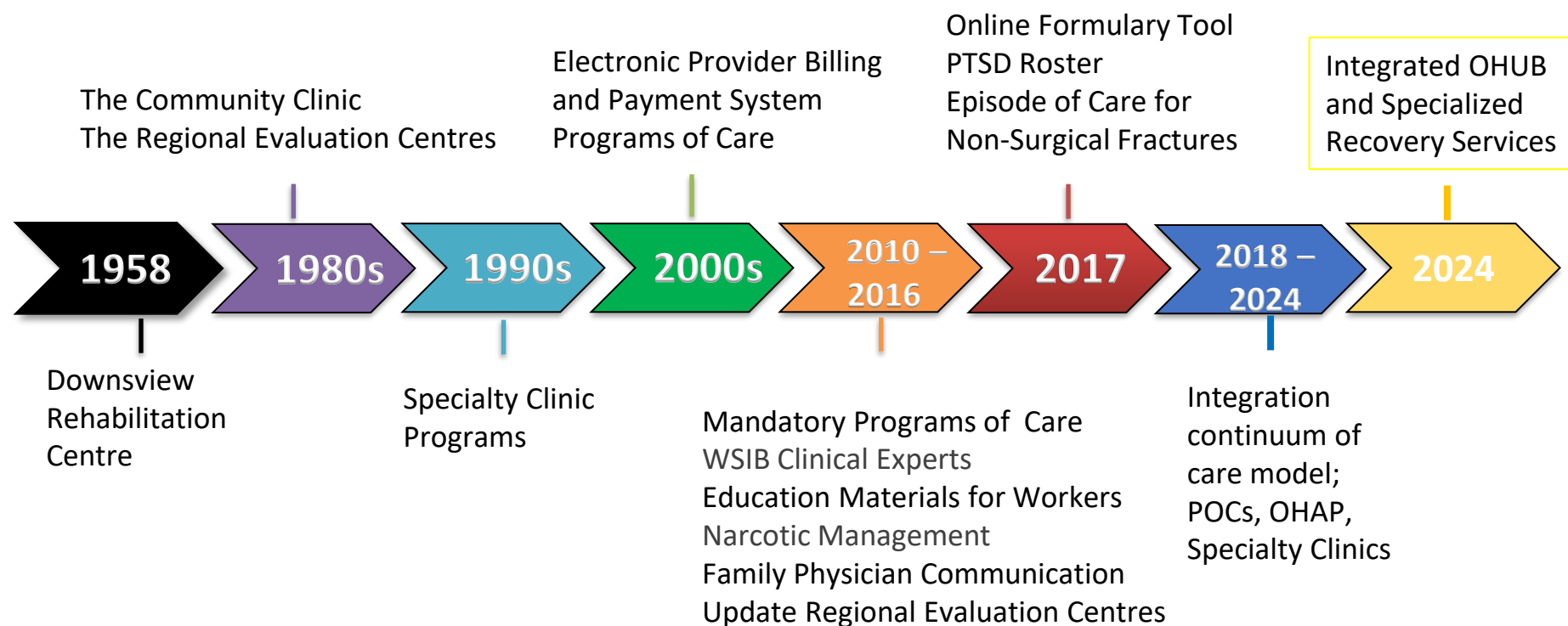
1. Describe health care programs provided by the WSIB and how to leverage them for your patients
2. Explain how return to work services function at WSIB



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Health Care Programs Provided by the WSIB

Evolution of Health Services at WSIB



The New Specialized Care Services



- In January 2024, WSIB issued a request for proposal for the new specialized care services program to replace the current Occupational Health Assessment Program and the Specialty Program.
- Effective October 28, 2024, the new specialized care services were implemented with 15 contracted hospital partners.
- These new programs are now called the **Occupational Health Hub and Specialized Recovery Services.**

WSIB Health Care Continuum

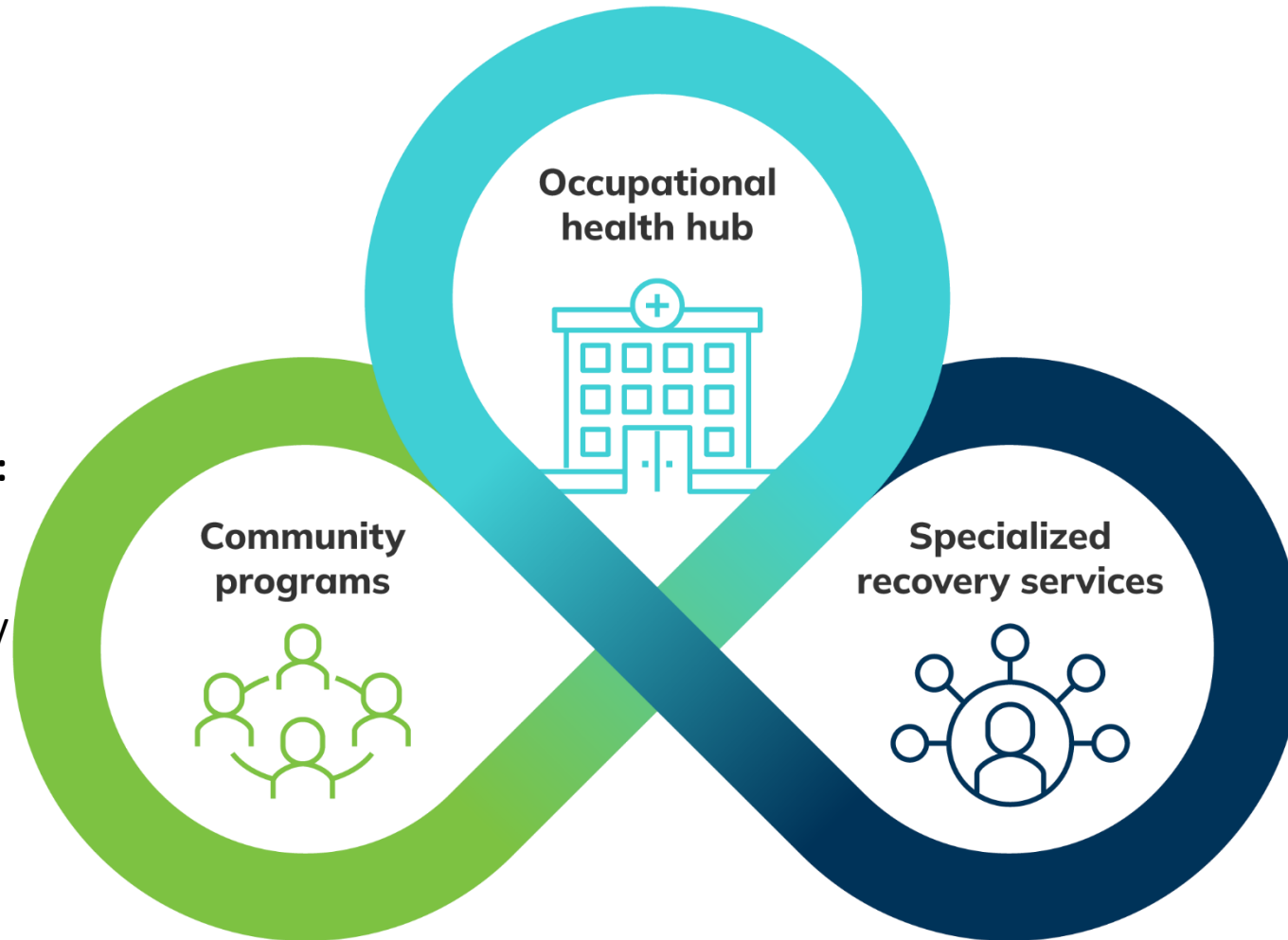


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Physician-led assessment and consultation services to
support recovery and return-to-work education and planning

First line Programs of Care:
Musculoskeletal (MSK),
mild traumatic brain injury
(mTBI) and interdisciplinary
team

**Community mental health
program**



**Enhanced
specialized care
programs**

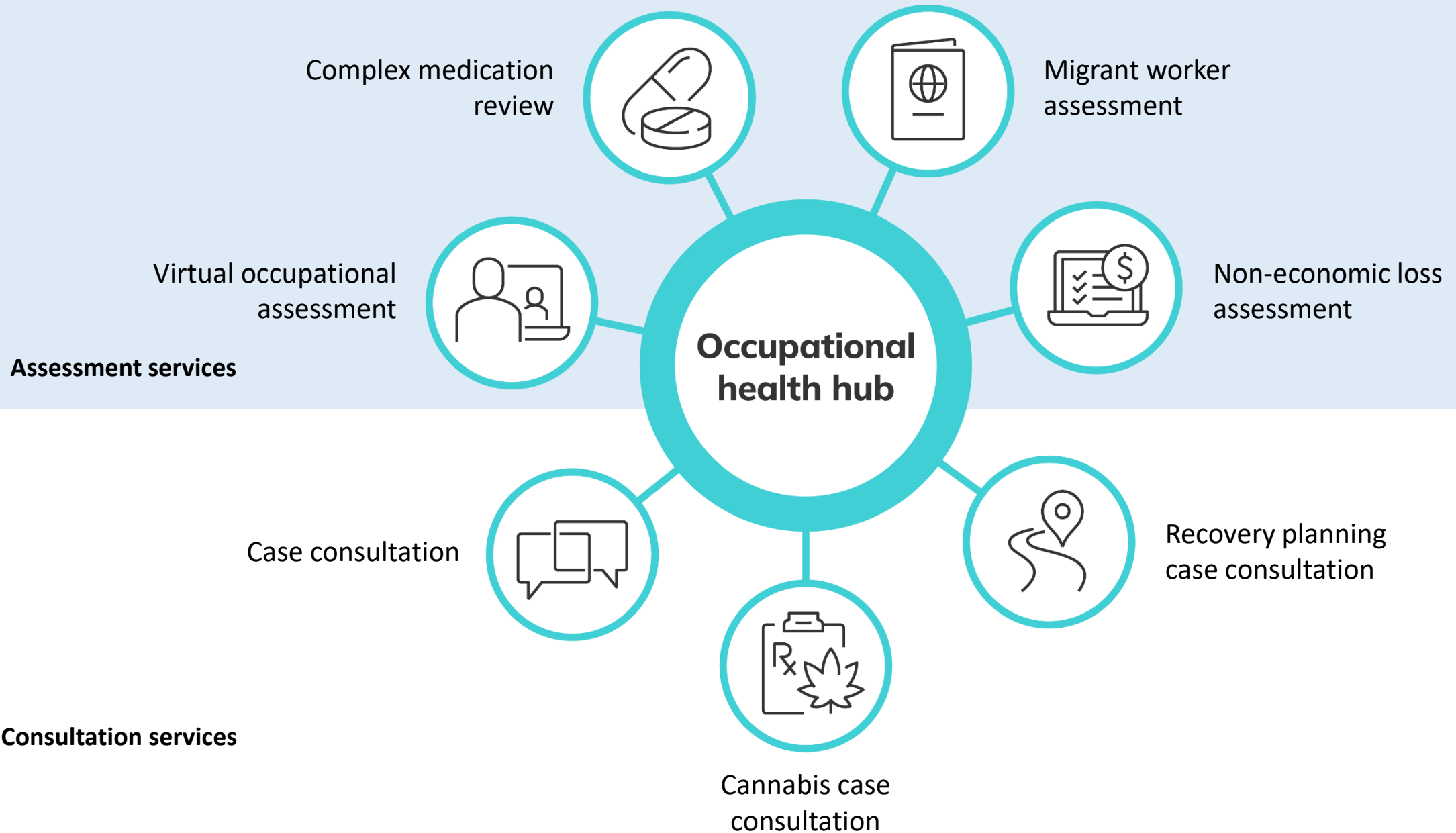
OHUB: Occupational Health Assessment Program



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- Physician led, with expertise in occupational rehabilitation, assessment and consultation services to support recovery and return-to-work
- Better distinction between Occupational Health Hub (OHUB) and Specialized Recovery Services (SRS) assessment services
 - All in-person MSK and mTBI assessment now within SRS, where patients are seen by a range of specialists, to ensure the right level of care at the right time
 - Permanent virtual assessment within OHUB providing early education and triage for next steps
- Assessments are distinct for the purpose of **education**, **triage** or to address a **specific focus** (i.e., migrant worker, non-economic loss, complex medication review)

Occupational Health Hub

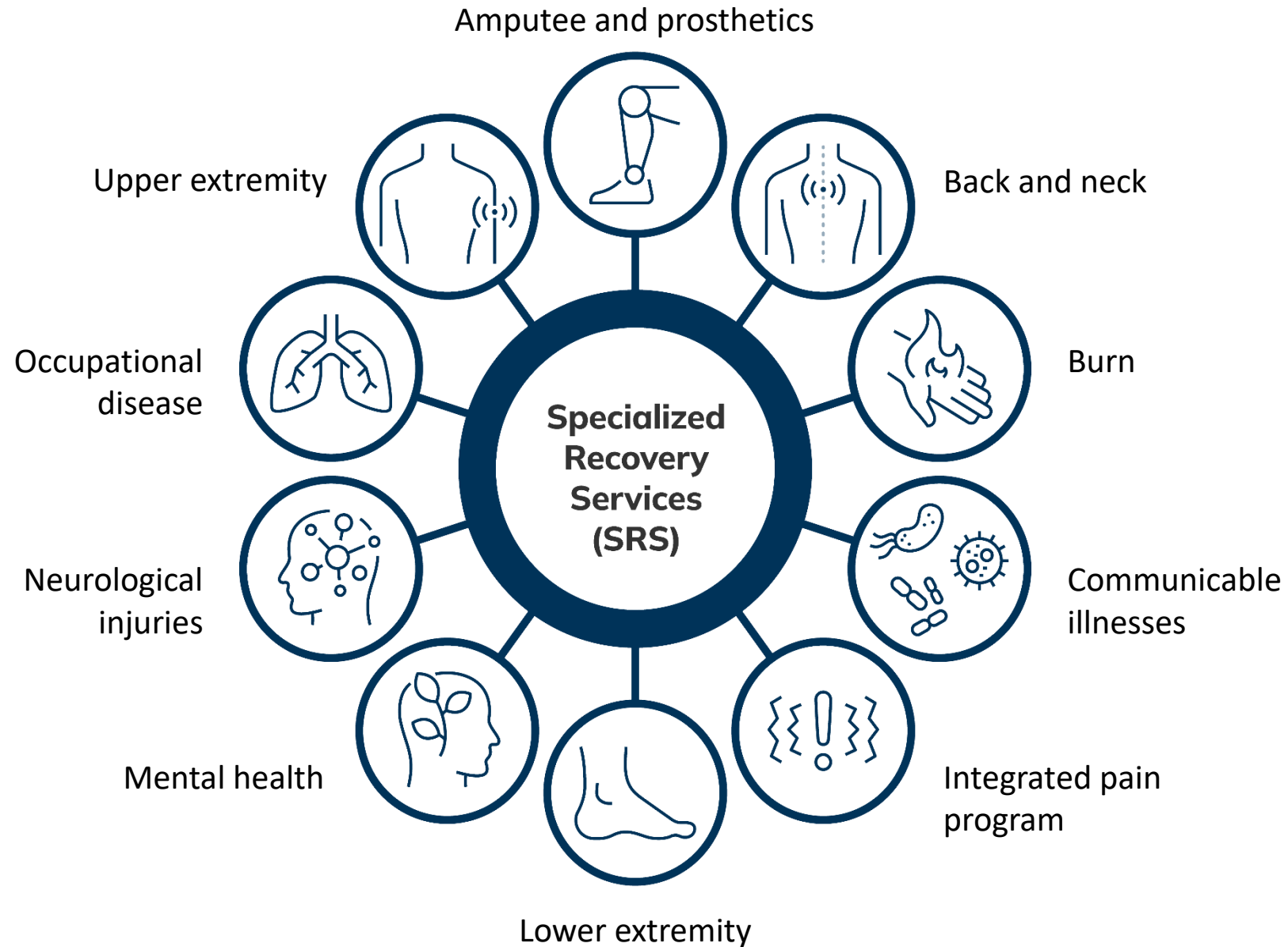


Specialized Recovery Services: Expanded and Enhanced Specialty Programs



- Broad scope of physicians completing assessments
- Functional recovery coordinator embedded in all programs
- Increased access to specialized expertise across the province
 - Mental health providers have expanded
 - New programs introduced
 - Pain
 - Communicable illness
 - Expanded neurological injuries – moderate/severe and spinal cord
 - Expanded access to French language services
- Providers will no longer comment on RTW recommendation. Will focus only on providing holistic functional abilities. RTW Specialists embedded in the program will operationalize restrictions and limitations from providers.

Specialized Care Programs



Specialized recovery services

Specialized recovery services provide timely access to a range of physician types for people with work-related injuries or illnesses. These programs specialize in recovery and achieving a healthy and safe return to work by conducting an assessment and providing interdisciplinary treatment for more complex injuries and illnesses.

There are ten specialized recovery services that people can access across the province:

1. Amputee, prosthetics and custom orthopaedic shoes
2. Burn
3. Back and neck
4. Communicable illnesses
5. Integrated pain
6. Lower extremity
7. Mental health
 - inclusive of a [pilot program specific for first responders](#)
8. Neurological injuries
 - Mild traumatic brain injury
 - Moderate or severe brain injury
 - Spinal cord injury
9. Occupational disease
10. Upper extremity

Comprehensive care when and where your patients need it

Our specialized recovery services offer the expertise of interdisciplinary health care teams who work together to provide the best care possible for someone with a workplace injury or illness.

We do this by:

- ensuring timely access to a comprehensive assessment in all our specialized recovery services to develop an integrated plan for recovery and return to work.
- providing a range of expertise in consultation and treatment services that address a person's unique health care needs within one program.
- ensuring communication, where beneficial, for physician specialists to connect with a patient's primary health care provider to share and discuss the results of the specialist's assessment and the treatment plan.
- including our return-to-work team to better support people's safe return to work.
- making sure there are providers and services across the province that offer, a range of expertise.

If you are a patient in one of our specialized recovery services and want to give feedback, you can read more about [how to provide patient feedback](#).

Referrals

To suggest a referral to one of our specialized recovery services, [call us](#) and ask to speak to your patient's nurse consultant or case manager, or indicate in your reports back to us that you think your patient might benefit from care in one of our services.

See our [contact list for specialized recovery services by location](#).

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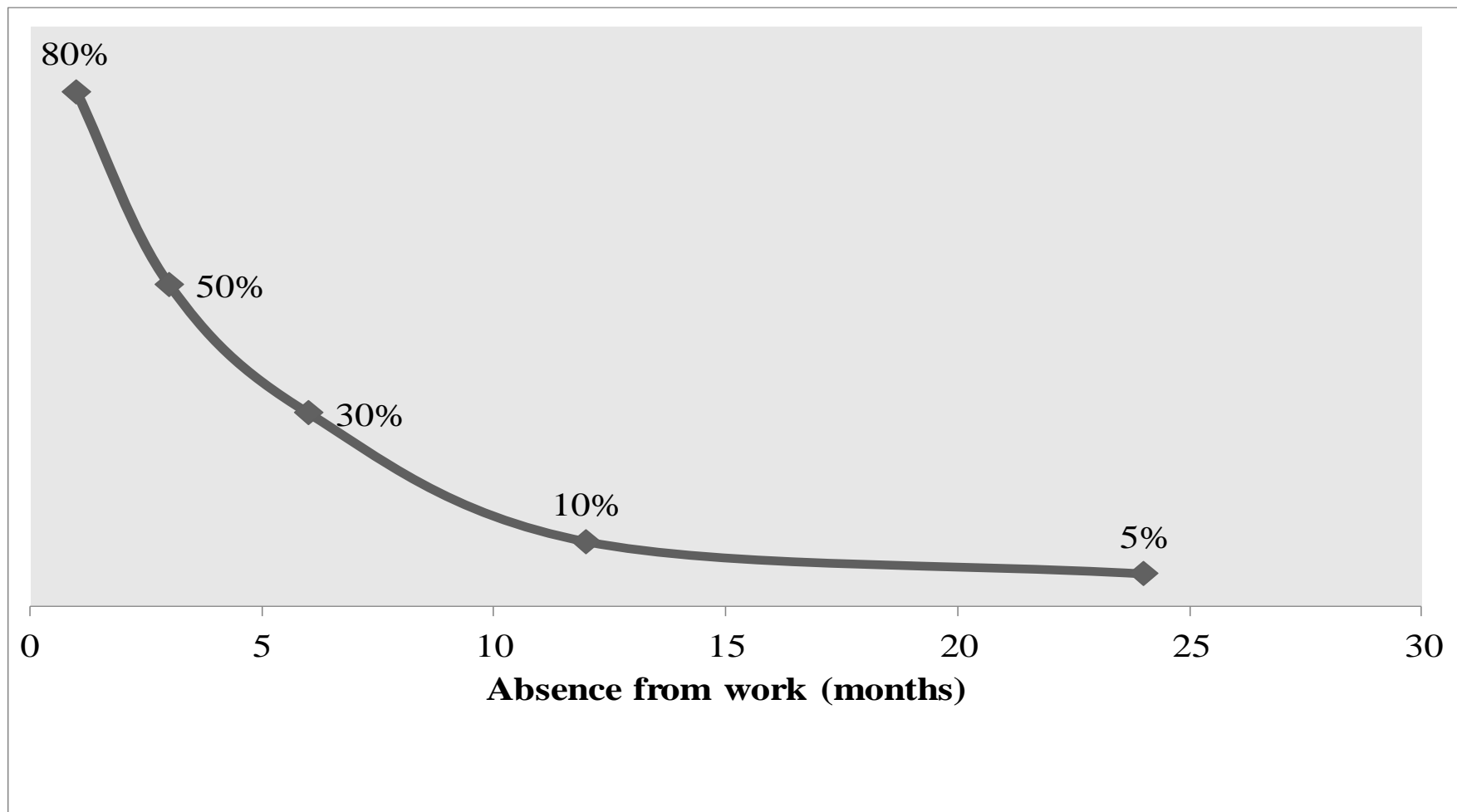
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Return to Work Services at WSIB

Likelihood of RTW after increasing durations of absence



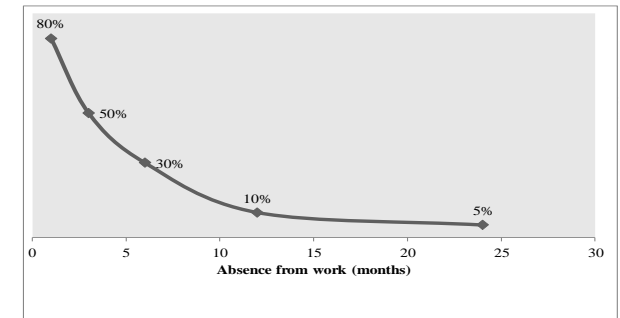
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References:

1. Texas Dept. of Insurance, Workers' Compensation Research and Evaluation Group; "Return to work outcomes for Texas injured workers"; 2007.
2. Infante-Rivard; "Prognostic factors for return to work after a first compensated episode of back pain"; Occup Environ Med 1996.
3. Waddell G, Burton AK, Main CJ. 2003. Screening to identify people at risk of long-term incapacity for work. Royal Society of Medicine Press, London.
4. Waddell G, Burton AK. Is work good for your health and well-being? London (UK): The Stationery Office; 2006.

Reasons likelihood of RTW decreases with prolonged absence from work



- **Medical Selection**

- More severe the injury, the higher the likelihood of prolonged or permanent disability.
- Complex injuries have longer durations of disability, and they also have lower likelihood of ever returning to work

- **Social Selection**

- Being off work itself, regardless of injury type or severity, is an independent cause of increasing work disability.
- Psychosocial factors that develop when a person is off work become important barriers to return to work.
- Therefore, with increasing time off work, there is an increase in psychosocial barriers to return to work, and this leads to lower likelihood of ever returning to work with increasing time off work.

Social Selection Mechanisms



- Fear-Avoidance
- Adjustment to new schedule and routines
- Real/perceived conflict with employer or co-workers
- Loss of work-role centrality
- Adverse impact on mental health (poor core self-evaluation, stronger stress appraisal, social undermining from others)

- “Phases model” - time course of adverse mental health effects with worklessness

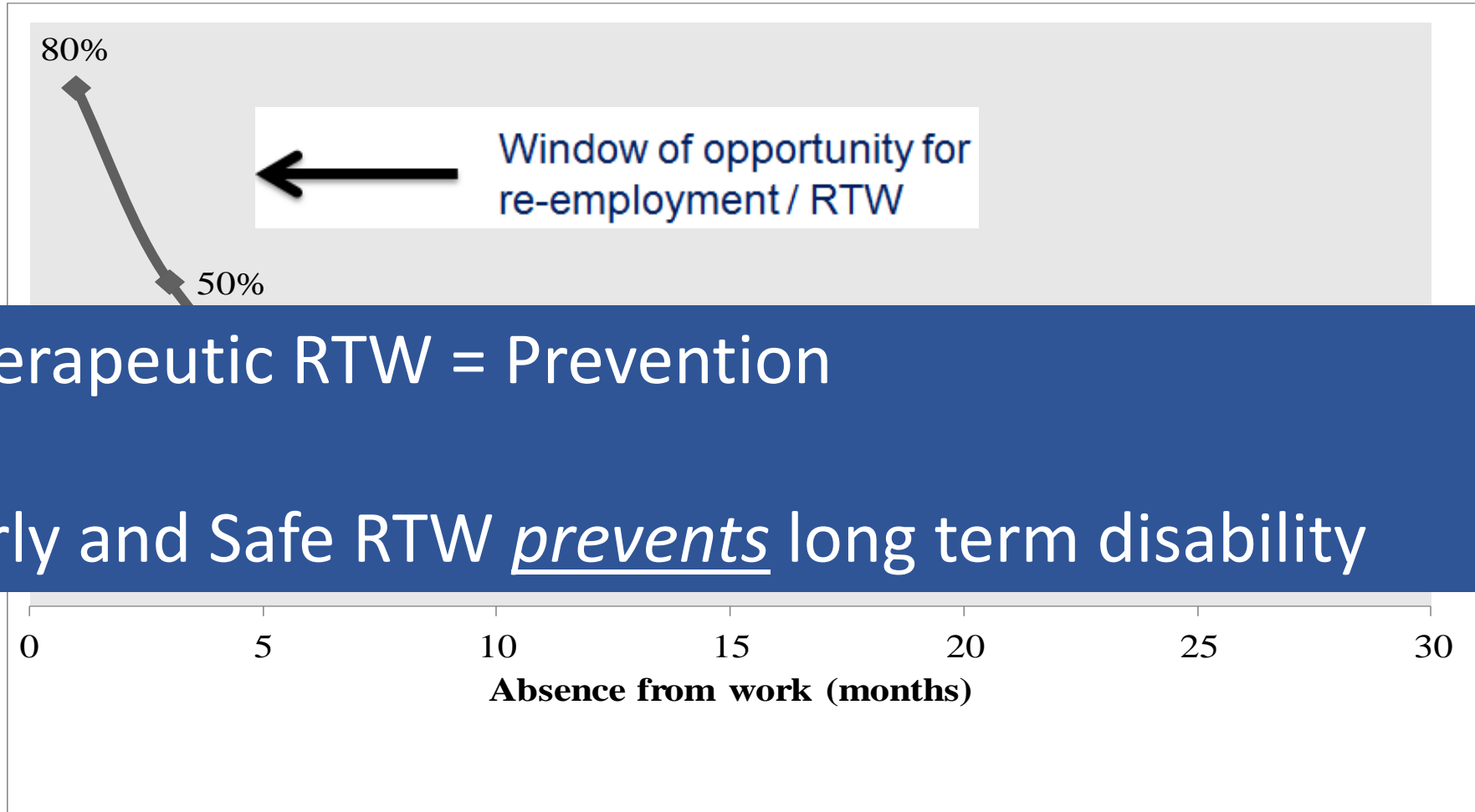
Three stages:

- optimistic activity ← Window of opportunity for RTW
- increasing distress
- fatalism and apathy

Likelihood of RTW after increasing durations of absence



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Therapeutic RTW = Prevention

Early and Safe RTW prevents long term disability

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Integrated RTW and Health Care at WSIB

1. RTW is an essential component of the rehabilitation process
2. Early intervention is key to prevent long-term disability
3. RTW and recovery must be integrated through well-defined programs
4. The employment relationship must be maintained between the employer and worker

RTW is a component of the treatment plan, but to be successful it requires a structured approach because:

- Beneficial effects depend on the nature of the work
- Jobs must be safe and accommodating
- Medical and non-medical barriers to RTW must be identified and addressed

WSIB RTW Services



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The WSIB operates in **14 different** locations across the province



The **RTW Program** within the WSIB currently employs some **300 staff**



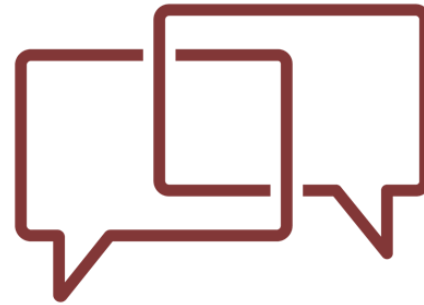
≈ **17,000** referrals sent to the program per year



RTW Specialists:

- Certified Disability Management Professional (CDMP) and Certified Return to Work Coordinator (CRTWC) designations.
- Facilitate worksite meetings between workers and employers to discuss and plan for appropriate RTW
- Provide expert advice, direction, vocational rehabilitation counselling and support workers and employers to coordinate the work transition process
- Identify appropriate and realistic work transition options for workers, such as direct job entry or skills training, part-time employment, self-employment, training on the job or direct job placement assistance

Discussion



More information:

<https://www.wsib.ca>

<https://www.wsib.ca/en/health-care-providers/resources/physician-learning-modules>