

PREFERRED WORKER Adviser

Winter 2011

community
Workers' Compensation

Danny's experience with the Preferred Worker Program

by Heather F. Grogan

Danny Williams, a 55-year-old whose lifetime occupation was as a welder/fabricator, injured his right (dominant) arm in 2008 and lost 99 percent use of it. Due to the extent of Danny's permanent limitations from the on-the-job injury, he was unable to return to his regular work and was eligible for vocational assistance. Danny was retrained and obtained his degree as a certified alcohol and drug counselor. Up to 50 percent of Danny's job tasks involve handwriting notes, keyboarding, lengthy telephone calls, and carrying numerous large client files to and from his office to the locked file room.

Danny asked the Preferred Worker Program if we could do anything to help him. The worksite modification consultant determined Danny needed the following modifications:

1. Ergonomic chair with a specialized right-arm rest and left-sided adjustment levers. The gel-pad arm rest supports Danny's arm without causing pressure on the damaged nerves in his arm. There are no office chairs that have the adjustment levers on the left side of the chair. Because Danny can't use his right arm, the chair was custom-made with the levers to be used by his uninjured left hand.
2. Desk at the appropriate height to accommodate his new ergonomic chair.

3. Telephone headset that allows Danny to talk on the phone and write or data-enter information without having to hold the telephone in his right hand.
4. File cart to carry multiple files between his office and the file room.
5. Laptop computer to use in group meetings so he doesn't have to take handwritten notes.
6. Voice recognition software to minimize data entry.
7. Electric hole punch and stapler to eliminate the frequent forceful push required when stapling or hole-punching large amounts of paper. Danny may be able to staple or hole-punch with his left hand, but he cannot hold and maneuver stacks of paper with his right hand. This allows him to do the staple/hole punch task with one hand.



Modified chair and desk



File cart

Danny is pleased with his experience with the Preferred Worker Program and said the following: *"I was amazed with the kindness and respect that I was shown by everyone involved. The worksite modification consultant could see what troubles I was having with the lack of a proper desk, chair, and cabinet. She also noted that my being a left-handed person (because I no longer have the use of my right hand) now was also problematic. The new computer and laptop with voice recognition software is going to be the difference between me doing a good job at work and not being able to do my job. The computers and the training will allow me to keep up with my caseload and be a productive member of the company. My job has given me a chance to continue a service to others that are in need, just like me."*

Team effort results in a successful worksite modification

by Bruce Friedrichsen

A successful worksite modification outcome resulted from the efforts of four motivated parties:

1. The worker who wanted to keep his employment.
2. The employer-at-injury who valued its employee's knowledge and skill.
3. The private rehabilitation counselor who worked with the employer to identify viable employment and advised the employer how the Preferred Worker Program benefits could assist with accommodating the injured worker.
4. The Preferred Worker Program worksite modification consultant who visualized some of the problematic tasks prior to the on-site meeting because the request was so thorough.

The worker's manufacturing technician job was quite technical. He retained his knowledge and experience for that job but he could no longer perform the physically demanding duties. The worker's low-back injury resulted in permanent restrictions of lifting, carrying, and bending. He could no longer handle heavy bags of raw material, especially lifting them to shoulder level and pouring the contents into a container. Handling 55-gallon drums was no longer possible. The worker could not

handle the five-gallon containers of the product because the weight exceeded his permanent lifting restriction. Another duty involved operating a lift truck (forklift) to move palletized materials. This required getting on and off the equipment to record weights of the materials. The frequent on-and-off requirement caused low-back pain. His permanent restrictions also precluded some duties that could not be modified, so the employer-at-injury eliminated those duties.

The employer-at-injury was concerned about the employee's loss of physical ability due to the on-the-job injury and wanted to accommodate him so he could continue working as a manufacturing technician. The private rehabilitation counselor provided excellent information to the Preferred Worker Program, including the worker's job description and pictures of problematic tasks. He also assisted the employer in preparing a job offer letter that the private rehabilitation counselor submitted along with the request for Preferred Worker Program assistance. The request for worksite modification was thorough and well-explained.

The worksite modification solutions included a portable jib crane and steel plate for the base. A vacuum lifter was provided for use with the crane. This equipment allowed the

worker to grab a bag and place it near the container, then empty the contents without lifting the bag. A lift-truck scale eliminated the requirement to get on and off the equipment to check weights of the palletized materials. A conveyor extension with rollers positioned at the fill station allowed handling of the five-gallon buckets without lifting and carrying them. The drum grabber attached to the lift truck allowed the worker to handle the 55-gallon drums and eliminate the man-handling task. These modifications and the employer's elimination of some duties allowed the worker to perform his modified manufacturing technician job duties within his permanent restrictions. The equipment also improved the production process, making it safer and more efficient.

The Preferred Worker Program consultant approved funding for the worksite modification, the worker kept his job at injury, the employer retained its valued worker, and the private rehabilitation counselor achieved a successful placement.

The private rehabilitation counselor shared "modifications are doing exactly what the worker and employer hoped." This is an example of another Preferred Worker Program win-win experienced by all parties.

Preferred Worker Adviser is a publication of the Oregon Workers' Compensation Division. If you have comments or suggestions regarding this newsletter, contact Ana Contreras at 503-947-7523 or send e-mail to ana.contreras@state.or.us. For information about the Preferred Worker Program call 800-445-3948.

Administrator..... John Shiels

Re-employment assistance

Salem office.....800-445-3948

Medford office..... 800-696-7161

Website..... www.oregonpwp.info

Contributors

Bruce Friedrichsen.....bruce.c.friedrichsen@state.or.us

Heather Grogan.....heather.f.grogan@state.or.us

Editor, Ana Contreras, Workers' Compensation Division

Editing, Mark Peterson, DCBS Communications

Design, Stacey Thias, DCBS Communications

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, this publication is available in alternative formats. This publication is in the public domain and may be copied and distributed without permission.

There must be a better way

Have you ever wondered if there is a better way to do your job? Here are a few solutions worksite modification consultants have used when assisting preferred workers.

DO THIS



A Power Mate Stair Climber is a better option when moving an appliance than using your back.

NOT THIS



A motorized mail cart can allow workers to not have to hand-carry heavy and awkward loads.



An adjustable-height work bench is much better than bending for prolonged periods.

What's wrong with this picture?

Shade can be pretty important on hot days, but don't sacrifice your safety for a little time out of the sun.

