

# ESTABLISHING A RISK BASED APPROACH TO INJURY MANAGEMENT & REHABILITATION





# Objectives of the presentation

- What is a risk management model?
- How do you apply a risk management model to injury management?
- What constitutes risk in the context of injury management and rehabilitation?
- What outcomes can be achieved by executing a risk management model?
- Why should your organisation have a risk management model?





# What is a risk management model in Injury Management

To establish and have an effective risk management model it must be:

- Strategic
- Systematic and
- Proactive  
in its approach to mitigating risks and addressing hazards in the workplace.

**“A workplace injury IS a hazard in and TO your workplace”**

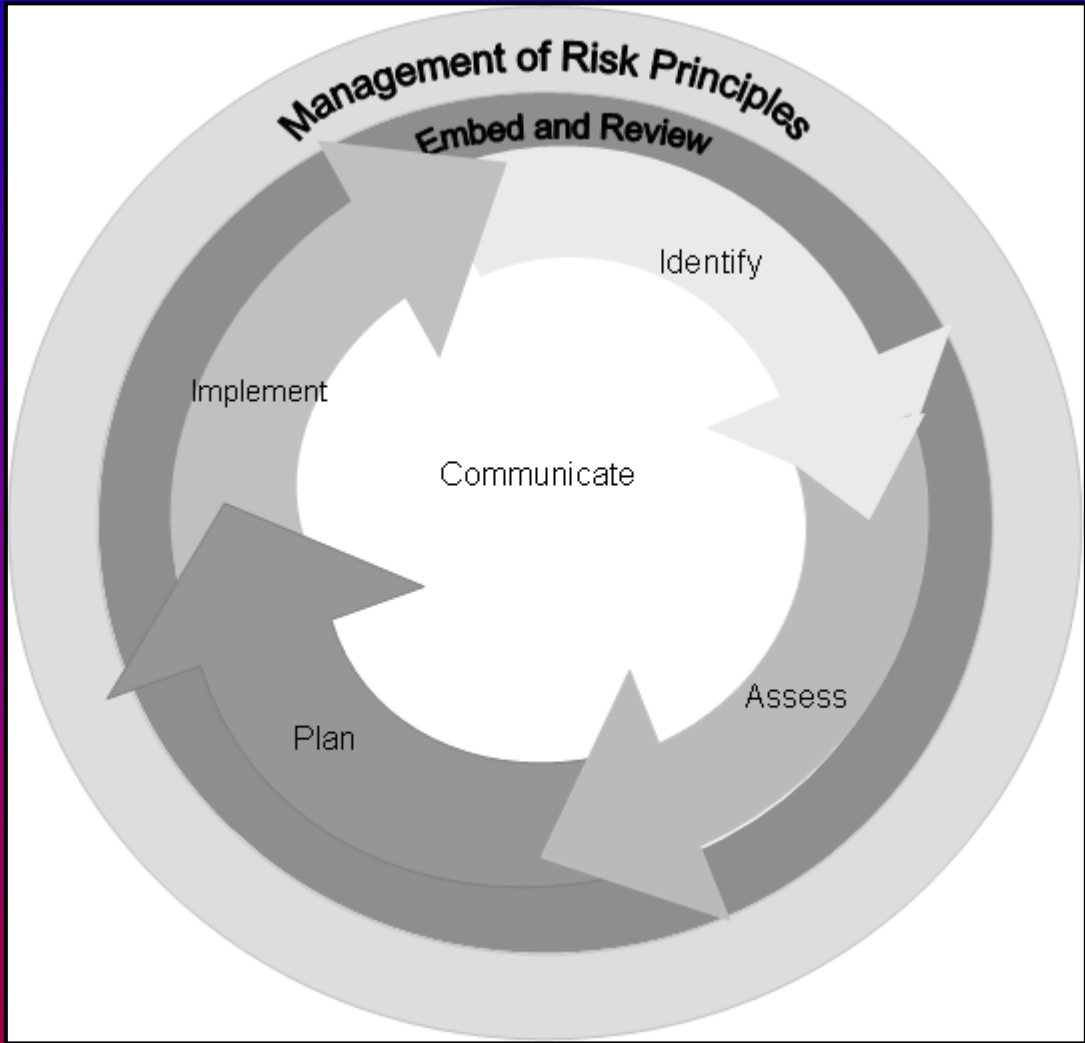




# What does a risk management model involve?

- Risk Identification
- Risk Assessment
- Risk Control
- Risk Evaluation & Review







# RISK IDENTIFICATION

- Involves identifying and acknowledging barriers & critical factors
- & assessing the likelihood and severity of any impact.





# Risk identification in an Injury Management Model

The Institute for Work & Health in Canada 2009 developed a “Guide to Identifying and Solving Return to Work Problems” by categorising and identifying barriers to recovery and return to work . The four categories of barriers/ critical factors are:

- Health Context
- Claims context
- Vocational Rehabilitation Context
- Work Context

these categories are the foundation of a bio-psycho-social approach to injury management and the risk management model.





# Risk Identification - HEALTH CONTEXT

- Complicated health situation such as 'Invisible' injuries
- Non work related health problems
- Impact of pre existing injuries
- Incomplete or delayed reporting
  - Evidence supports early reporting influences the likelihood of more active medical management prior to injuries becoming long term.
- Medication Use
  - Reactions / side effects to medication
  - Changes in medication use
  - Multiple prescriptions





# Risk Identification- CLAIMS CONTEXT

- Poor/ inappropriate response to report of injury
- Delayed Reporting and delayed decision making
  - Delayed reporting of injury influences the cost of the claim via an increase in lost time days.
    - “ Claims reported within 2 weeks of injury were 18% more expensive than claims reported within 1 week”...
    - Evidence also highlights the longer the delay in reporting an injury = an increase in claims cost.
  - Delay in arranging treatment/ rehabilitation support
  - Conflicts
  - Long waits for decisions
  - Worker Non Compliance





# Risk Identification- CLAIMS CONTEXT

- Poor Communication
  - Indirect contact, everything via phone/ mail etc
  - Decisions made without collaboration
  
- Worker Reactions
  - Angry – distressed - upset – confused worker
  - Workplace culture
  - Complaints about RTW



# Risk Identification – VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CONTEXT

*“Workers who were referred for vocational rehabilitation services within the first 6 months following injury were twice as likely to return to work”. (Blackwell et al 2004)*





# Risk Identification - VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CONTEXT

- Delayed vocational rehabilitation involvement
  - Negative worker reaction – left alone too long, has to explain too much of what has transpired.
  - Scope for formation of poor attitudes, poor communication and misunderstanding by the injured worker and treatment providers of process and participation requirements
  - Worker feeling unsupported and disengaged.
  
- Treatment and vocational activities/ goals not well aligned





# Risk Identification - **VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CONTEXT**

- Conflicting views of RTW readiness
- Unrealistic Vocational Rehabilitation Activities
  - Activities not strategically aligned with goals/ available duties / medical treatment plan.
  - Lack of comprehensive assessment of organisational needs and training needs assessments.
  - Worker unable to physically or vocationally undertake/ complete activities





# Risk Identification – WORK CONTEXT

- Reaction of the workplace to a workplace injury and its management
- RTW too Early or not fast enough
  - RTW with unclear understanding of the impact of the injury
  - Work Absences after RTW
  - Unnecessary or extended time away from workplace, with poor contact
  - Secondary gains in the home evolve, perceived financial gains, dependency on others.
  - Location of worksite and impact on ability to travel
- Unsuitable Work Tasks
- "Embarrassing" Modified Work
  - Undertaking less meaning-full / lower status work
  - Co-worker bullying/ harassment





# Risk Identification – OTHER INDICATORS

## ➤ Age

- Studies show that workers who are under 50 years old are twice as likely to return to work than those over 50.

## ➤ Living Arrangements

- Poor family and social support can be a predictor of poorer return to work outcomes.

## ➤ Gender

- Research is inconclusive on gender impacting on return to work outcomes.





# RISK ASSESSMENT

- **WHAT?** Assessing impact/ influence/ effect/ bearing of critical factors that have been identified.
- **HOW?**  
Various methods – such as:
  - the flag system,
  - numerically categorising,
  - Labelling/ Descriptive system
- Important to have a consistent approach
- What's right is what's right for you





# RISK CONTROL in Injury Management

- Requires acknowledging that problems will always arise, it is how they are remedied which determines success!
- Apply the assessment tool as soon as an injury occurs and during the recovery.
- Important to use the information – build it into your program.
- Make sure your approach to the risk factors that you have identified and assessed are:
  - Quickly acknowledged
  - Regularly reassessed – keep your approach ALIVE because behaviours and situations DO CHANGE!
  - Considerate and sensitive to the individual, remembering.....the injured worker is a PERSON!!!





# RISK EVALUATION & REVIEW

The review process should involve:

- regular and informal review on a case by case basis but also formally assessed in totality.
- Does your risk management model meet your organisation's needs - is it Strategic, Systematic and Proactive?
- Keep it relevant.
- Review your Assessment tool – is your assessment scale broad enough or is too broad ?
- Ensure you have implemented positive performance indicators that go beyond claims data.
- Use your risk management model to maintain **TRACTION!**





# PREVENTION

- use all the knowledge gained from your injury management model and incorporate this into your OH& S systems.
- go beyond - apply the principals to build your workplace culture - **“understand your workforce, get to know them as individuals”**.
- Create an organisational culture that is caring and responsive.



# How do you approach workplace injuries ?



# References

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