



Early intervention is key to improving health outcomes for workers and supporting recovery and return to work. Effective early intervention (EI) programs provide an opportunity for employers to demonstrate their commitment to workers, workplace safety culture, and create productive and supportive workplaces.

This document provides ideas and practical steps to monitor and evaluate an EI program in your workplace by drawing on available research and findings, including from Comcare's EI pilot.



STEP 1: Consider your early intervention program's goal and/or objectives

What is your program aiming to achieve, and how will you get there? An example is provided below.

Program goal:

To support injured and unwell workers to recover and return to health.

Program objectives:

Our early intervention program aims to provide injured or unwell workers:

- Early access to high quality treatment support services
- Self-management strategies where clinically appropriate
- Enhanced ability, and support, to recover at and return to work.



Tip: Ensure you have sufficient staff resources to implement and monitor your program.



STEP 2: How will you know if you're meeting your goal and objectives?

Whether your organisation collects measurement data or receives reports from an external provider, you should consider the goals and objectives of your EI program – such as program utilisation, worker health outcomes and service satisfaction – and how they will be measured.

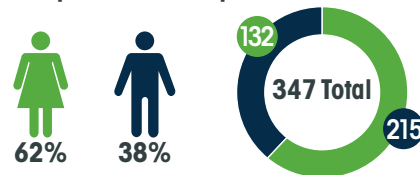
Data should also be collected to inform WHS risk identification, concerns and continuous improvement. Some suggested data items are listed below. Organisations must recognise their employees' right to privacy and ensure that any collection, use or disclosure of their personal and/or sensitive medical information is compliant with the relevant privacy legislation.

Demographic information

- Worker name
- Age range of injured worker
- Gender of injured worker
- Location of injured worker
- Job title
- Team/group name (if known).

Suggestions on data items are listed below

Example - Comcare pilot results:



Injury information

- Date of injury (if known)
- Triage outcome or advice upon program entry
- Date of triage call/early intervention program entry
- Referral pathway (if applicable)
- Mechanism of injury
- Has the worker accessed the program previously? (If so when?).
- Body location of injury
- Type of injury
- Work-related or non-work-related injury (if applicable)
- Symptom(s) and onset
- Date of triage call/early intervention program entry

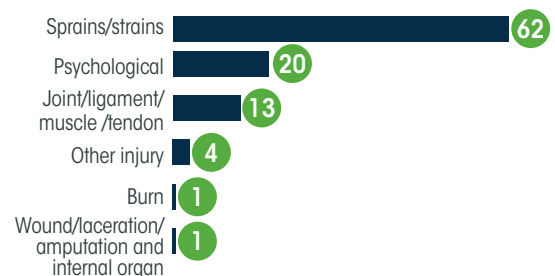


Tip: If the date of the injury is difficult to determine, record the date symptoms started.



Tip: The timeframe for notification of injury to triage can be calculated by recording the date of injury and date of triage call.

Example - Comcare pilot results:



Treatment information

- Timeliness of appointment with treating health practitioner(s) (e.g. number of days between triage and first appointment)
- Number of appointments/treatments
- Fitness for work (if known)
- Reason for program exit.

Cost of treatment:

- Health practitioner(s)
- Medical imaging
- Ancillary items (e.g. bandages)
- Medication (e.g. pain killers).

Workplace data

- Leave usage
- Workplace adjustments
- RTW status
- Claim submitted (Y/N).

Satisfaction measures

- Overall program
- Triage service/program entry
- Process (e.g. seeking reimbursement for treatment)
- Practitioner/s.

Example - Comcare pilot results:

80% of participants received treatment within:



3 days for physical injury



8 days for psychological injury

93% of participants were certified fit for work



Tip: The pilot model allowed workers to access up to four GP visits, four physiotherapy visits, and four psychology sessions.

Example - Comcare pilot results:

94% of participants rated the overall program as good or very good.

92% stated the pilot was easy to access.

77% rated the practitioner as very good.

81% of participants feel their supervisor supported their health and wellbeing at work.



STEP 3: Identify how the data will be captured, stored and reported

For each data point that will be captured or measured, consider each of the following points. An example is provided below.

Measure	Early intervention program effectiveness.
Definition	The program's effectiveness in supporting injured or unwell workers to access timely treatment and recover at and return to work.
Purpose	To measure whether the early intervention program is supporting workers to access the treatment they need in order to recover at and return to work.
Baseline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current use and duration of personal leave (for injury and illness impacting on ability to work) • Current number of workers away from work (due to an injury or illness impacting on their ability to work) • Current level of worker incapacity • Current level of return to work planning/number of plans in place • Current rehabilitation and treatment costs.
Target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • x% decrease in use and duration of personal leave for injury and illness impacting on ability to work • x% increase in the number of injured or unwell staff recovering at or returned to work • x% decrease in employee incapacity • x% increase in the use of return to work planning • x% decrease in rehabilitation and treatment costs • x% of workers receive treatment within one week of accessing the program (if clinically indicated).



Tips for setting targets: Targets must be meaningful for each employer or workplace. They should be set upon baseline data or current performance along with historical data. They should reflect what the program is aiming to achieve for workers and by when. Workplaces may increase the targets year on year and include performance stretch goals.

Data Collection	<p>The following data points will be used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave usage data collected by the human resources system • Work capacity data collected from GP issued Certificates of Capacity • Return to work status code (if the worker has lodged a claim) taken from workers' compensation data • Return to work plan information stored on individual worker's personnel files • Invoices from treating health professionals, occupational rehabilitation providers etc to measure rehabilitation and treatment costs • Date of early intervention program entry (from workplace or service provider) and date of first appointment with treating health practitioner (from service provider or treating health practitioner invoice) to measure time to first appointment. <p>The data is collated and stored within a secure reporting repository (for example locked database or spreadsheet).</p>
Tools	Secure spreadsheet or database to store the information.
Frequency	Data collected and collated quarterly.
Responsibility	The Early Intervention Program Coordinator is responsible for collecting and collating the data and compiling the results in the spreadsheet/database.
Reporting	This data is reported to the Executive Health and Safety Committee on a bi-annual basis.
Quality Control	Another member of the team verifies the data to ensure its accuracy before it is reported to the Executive Health and Safety Committee.



STEP 4: Implement your monitoring and framework

- Implement processes to capture and report on measurement data.
- Monitor the data on a regular basis to measure the effectiveness of your program.



STEP 5: Ongoing quality assurance and evaluation

- Develop regular reporting tools and understand your audience.
- Identify frequency of reporting and channels for EI results (e.g. Executive, Board of Directors).
- Use the data collected to understand overall program effectiveness and identify areas for improvement (e.g. prevention and wellbeing strategies).
- Identify any links between collected data and your WHS program information.
- Inform the Executive of the benefits of your early intervention program, e.g. compare the recovery outcomes of program participants against workers who didn't utilise the program.



Other resources

Comcare's [Better practice: Early intervention factsheet](#) provides a set of key points to consider when designing or reviewing your early intervention program.

Comcare's [Early Intervention Service Pilot factsheet](#) outlines the pilot and results achieved.

Learn more on early intervention in our e-learn module: [Early intervention: An overview for managers and supervisors.](#)