



Executive Director's Corner:

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As summer winds down and the beginning of the school year approaches, we at the Puget Sound Workers' Compensation Trust and Unemployment Pool (PSWCT/UP) look forward to our continuing collaboration with you to make school districts the safest possible working and learning environment. We remain steadfast in our commitment to deliver unsurpassed claims and risk management solutions to minimize total cost of risk while maximizing injured worker outcomes.

How we deliver on our commitment is just as important as realizing that commitment. We have become intentional about our risk management approach and how it aligns with our Agency's mission – Success for Each Child and Eliminate the Opportunity Gap by Leading with Racial Equity. How do we deliver risk management services with an equity lens? This edition of Executive Director's Corner introduces our [Pathway to Change](#), our journey to its adoption, and the outcomes we aspire.

Impetus

Our Pathway to Change was developed out of a desire to strengthen alignment of our risk management work with our Agency's mission. In our pursuit of becoming an antiracist, multicultural organization, the way we do our work is just as critical as goal achievement. Towards that end, [agency-wide competencies](#) were established to guide the manner in which we do our work.

Alignment

Our Pathway to Change consists of four (4) overarching strategic areas. I'll touch individually on each of the four (4) strategic areas in subsequent editions of *Sound Advice*. But here is a description of each area:

Stakeholder Experience - To create a consistent, quality experience for school districts, injured workers, and providers.

Educational Continuity – Support school district staffing consistency and stability through injury/illness prevention and averting unnecessary disability duration.

Responsible Stewardship – Protect and make prudent use of entrusted resources.

Employee Experience – Cultivate a culture that fosters staff engagement and encourages best work.

We became intentional about how we can deliver services with an equity focus and in a culturally responsive manner. When the Return-To-Work incentive program was developed, an equity lens was applied to ensure that small school districts were not disadvantaged because of size. The result was the launch this past March of an incentive program that provided meaningful financial opportunity for all school districts to participate in, regardless of size, with each school district allotted a pool of funds to offset wage loss expense.

Another intentional effort towards alignment with our equity pursuits is associated with our conversion a few years ago to a new claims system. Given the increasing diversity of the workforce, as well as the composition of English language learners in the workforce, careful thought was given to capturing voluntarily-submitted heritage information from injured workers that can proactively inform the delivery of culturally-relevant services. This includes interpreter and translation services and access to providers of same heritage, if desired. [Research](#) shows that patients of color tend to be more compliant with their treatment plan, and hence have quicker recovery time when treated by providers who share racial identity. Other research, soon to be released by Portland University Library, demonstrates the disparity present within workers' compensation systems where racial, ethnic, and linguistic minority workers suffer higher rates of work-related injuries and illnesses in the United States compared to their White counterparts. Our goal is to deliver services in a manner that eliminates that disparity.

Lastly, because services delivered by our vendor partners are an extension of the risk management services that we deliver to school districts and injured workers, we've requested of them, as part of their performance expectations, to use best efforts to ensure that service delivery aligns and is consistent with our equity focus.

We will continue to be intentional about the way we deliver services. Pursuing risk management initiatives to maximize injured worker outcomes while minimizing total cost of risk in a manner that aligns with our Agency's goal of Success for Each Child and Eliminate the Opportunity Gap by Leading with Racial Equity is our focus. That goal encompasses injury/illness prevention as well. We aspire to collaborate with our school districts to offer safety and training information in the preferred language of employees who are English language learners to ensure that safety information is understood. We are eager to continue our work with you and your staff to cultivate the safest possible working and learning environment.

Wishing you the best school year ever!