

Public Education Benefits Trust Joint Early Intervention Service and Long-term Disability Reporting

The Public Education Benefits Trust (PEBT) has recently addressed a number of incidents of support staff who are covered under the PEBT Long-term Disability (LTD) Plan being denied PEBT LTD benefits as a result of missed deadlines of the PEBT LTD plan.

While the circumstances of each incident are unique, all participants in the PEBT have various responsibilities to ensure a timely referral into the Joint Early Intervention Service (JEIS) program, a supportive health care treatment plan, a seamless transfer from the JEIS program onto the LTD plan if LTD is required, and, ideally, a successful return to work.

The JEIS program commences once a PEBT support staff employee is ill or injured and away from work for six consecutive scheduled working days. Many school districts consistently meet or very closely meet this six-day reporting target. Those districts achieve this target through a combination of focused reporting systems and staff dedicated and committed to achieving the reporting target.

However, there are districts that consistently fail to meet this reporting target and even incidents where districts fail to refer absent employees into the program at all.

It is critically important to the success of the JEIS program that districts refer PEBT support staff employees into the program in a timely manner. The JEIS program commences at the time of referral into the program and continues during the 120-day elimination (waiting) period until the LTD plan commences.

All PEBT support staff employee absences of six consecutive scheduled working days or longer must be referred into the JEIS program, including absences where WorkSafe BC claims are potentially pending or are in progress and absences that are anticipated to be short-term.

A late referral, or no referral, into the JEIS program not only deprives the PEBT support staff employee of the many benefits of participation but may also jeopardize the employee's eligibility for LTD plan benefits. **Where a PEBT support staff employee is denied PEBT LTD benefits as a result of an act or omission of the district, the district may be responsible for payment of the LTD benefits owed to that employee.**

Claims for LTD benefits must be received by the LTD Plan Administrator (Desjardins) within 30 days of the end of the 120-day elimination period. This claim is facilitated by the Desjardins Health Care Management Specialist (HCMS) through the employee's JEIS participation. For a PEBT support staff employee who becomes disabled during the school year and has been

actively at work, the 120-day elimination period starts on the first day the employee is not able to work because of illness or injury. Medical documentation to support the LTD claim must be provided within 60 days of the end of the 120-day elimination period.

A late referral into the JEIS program prevents the HCMS from facilitating a timely and smooth transfer from JEIS to LTD. No referral into the JEIS program prevents the HCMS from facilitating the LTD claim process at all. Both a late referral and no referral into the JEIS program jeopardize the timely adjudication of LTD claims and may result in missed deadlines and the denial of PEBT LTD benefits

BCPSEA and the PEBT thank you for your continued and ongoing attention and dedication to the success of the JEIS and LTD programs. If you have any questions or comments regarding this bulletin, including any suggestions as to how the PEBT or BCPSEA can assist districts in meeting the responsibilities of the JEIS program, please contact Laura Buchanan at laurab@bcpsea.bc.ca or 604 730 4522.