

**School:** Humanities  
**Course:** Communicating to Create Understanding  
**Faculty:** David Langham, Deputy Chief Judge of Compensation Claims, Florida  
Division of Workers' Compensation

### **Summary**

In the course "Communicating to Create Understanding," Judge David Langham emphasizes the importance of effective communication within the workers' compensation system. He begins by acknowledging that communication is often subjective and dynamic, making it essential for recovery team members to continuously test and verify their understanding of each other. The success of communication lies in its clarity, conciseness, and ability to build trust among team members, particularly between injured workers and professionals involved in the recovery process.

Langham explains that clarity is often a significant challenge. Communication must be simple and direct to avoid misunderstandings while ensuring that the message is appropriate for diverse and distracted audiences. He highlights the need for empathy and active listening, stressing that understanding and engagement are key to successful interactions. The role of the claims professional, who acts as the leader of the recovery team, is to effectively coordinate and manage communication, ensuring that everyone remains focused on the shared goal of recovery.

An important aspect of communication, according to Langham, is managing emotions. He acknowledges that frustration, anger, and misunderstandings are common, especially when dealing with injured workers and other professionals. Langham advises that it's crucial to remain calm and de-escalate emotional situations through distraction and empathy. By acknowledging frustrations and validating emotions, professionals can prevent communication breakdowns that may hinder recovery.

Langham also discusses the importance of selecting appropriate communication methods. He advocates for face-to-face communication as the most powerful tool, followed by video calls, telephone conversations, and written correspondence like emails or text messages. While technology offers convenience, Langham warns that it can also increase the potential for miscommunication. Therefore, using multiple forms of communication—such as following up a phone call with an email—can reinforce key messages and reduce the risk of misunderstandings.

Consistency in messaging is another key theme of the course. Langham underscores the value of repetition and clear leadership. He encourages recovery team leaders to repeat important points, ensuring that both the injured worker and other professionals

understand the goals of recovery. Consistency helps build credibility and keeps the team aligned with the common objective: the worker's successful recovery and return to work.

Additionally, Langham introduces the concept of motivational interviewing as a communication strategy. He describes it as a conversational, interactive approach where professionals engage injured workers and employers to uncover their concerns and motivations. By asking open-ended questions and actively listening, recovery professionals can better understand the root causes of a person's hesitations, fears, or frustrations, making it easier to address these issues collaboratively.

In summary, this course emphasizes the importance of clear, concise, and empathetic communication in the workers' compensation system. Langham encourages professionals to build trust through active listening, manage emotions effectively, and utilize appropriate communication tools. Ultimately, by fostering collaborative and consistent communication, recovery teams can achieve better outcomes for both injured workers and their employers.

### **Learning Objectives**

1. Understand the critical role of effective communication in achieving successful recovery outcomes.
2. Recognize the importance of clarity, conciseness, and active listening in communication.
3. Explore the dynamics of building trust and collaboration within a recovery team.
4. Learn strategies for managing diverse communication styles and preferences.
5. Develop skills to handle emotional and complex conversations, especially in high-stress environments.

### **Primary Takeaways**

1. It's essential to continuously test and verify understanding to ensure clarity.
2. Clear, concise communication helps bridge the gap between team members, injured workers, and employers, promoting effective collaboration.
3. Empathy and understanding are foundational for building trust and promoting engagement.
4. Communication must be flexible to address and defuse anger, frustration, and misunderstandings, ensuring a productive dialogue.
5. Understanding when and how to use tools like face-to-face meetings, emails, and text messages is vital to avoid misinterpretation.

### **Course Outline**

- 1) Importance of Communication in the Recovery Process
  - a) Critical Role of Communication
    - i) Successful outcomes depend on clear, concise communication.
    - ii) Understanding that communication is subjective, necessitating continuous checks.
  - b) Building Trust and Collaboration
    - i) Collaboration between the injured worker and recovery team is essential.
    - ii) Trust-building through clear communication promotes engagement and productivity.
  
- 2) Strategies for Effective Communication
  - a) Clear and Concise Communication
    - i) Importance of explaining without talking down to people.
    - ii) Managing the amount of information shared without overwhelming the listener.
  - b) Active Listening
    - i) Empathy and understanding are key to effective listening.
    - ii) Techniques for confirming understanding to avoid miscommunication.
  - c) Managing Emotions
    - i) Recognizing and managing emotions like anger or frustration in conversations.
    - ii) Utilizing distraction and non-confrontational techniques to de-escalate emotional situations.
  
- 3) Tools and Methods for Successful Communication
  - a) Choosing the Right Communication Tool
    - i) Knowing when to use face-to-face meetings, emails, or text messages.
    - ii) Balancing the convenience of technology with the need for personal connection.
  - b) Repetition and Consistency in Messaging
    - i) Reinforcing key messages through repetition.
    - ii) Maintaining consistency in communication to build credibility and trust.
  - c) Engaging and Motivating the Team
    - i) Asking open-ended questions to promote deeper understanding.
    - ii) Engaging the team in collaborative decision-making to ensure commitment and buy-in.

NOTE: Artificial Intelligence was used in the creation of this document.