

There is no absolute in the prevention of workplace accidents and injuries. Even with the most comprehensive safety program in place, accidents and injuries can only, at best, be minimized. So, when injuries or illnesses do occur, management is then responsible to do everything possible to provide prompt medical care and to assist the injured worker in returning to full, productive employment.

STEP 1 Formation of Return-to-Work Committee (or Team)

The first step to beginning a Return-to-Work program for your company is to develop the committee (or team). The committee will not only establish the workplace policy but also guide and monitor the program's administration. The Return-to-Work team will be involved in all aspects of case management. Its collective goal is to direct the injured worker's recovery toward a return to productive employment. Each injury requires personal attention. To be successful, you will need to continually fine-tune your program to meet the ongoing needs of your employees and your company.

Each company's team will vary depending on the size and resources of the company. Each member of the team is either assigned a specific role or provides important information and support during the treatment and rehabilitation of the injured worker.

After an injury occurs, the information gathered during the Return-to-Work process allows for the evaluation of job positions and work sites and the improvement of loss prevention and safety process. The assigned personnel will also be able to identify questionable incidents and unsafe work conditions through aggressive investigation and management.

It is essential, if you work in a union shop, to have union representation on your Committee. One of the greatest benefits afforded to your workplace through establishing a Return-to-Work program is the spirit of collaboration that occurs when employees and representatives from all areas come together with the mutual goal of returning injured workers to the workplace. A Return-to-Work program depends on joint Labor/ Management cooperation.

Additionally, any and all information relative to the employee's medical history and/or condition needs to be kept confidential and should be handled only by your Human Resources committee representative who can serve as a case manager. Ensuring this high level of confidentiality will bolster your employees' confidence in program participation.

Management and Worker Representatives

It is essential to make sure there are representatives from both management and the workforce serving on your Return-to-Work committee.

A firm commitment from top management to the necessity of the program and its benefits are demonstrated best by representation on the committee. Part of management's role on the committee will be to develop a strategy to communicate support and commitment throughout the organization

The worker representative might be a union member or, in non-unionized workplaces, an employee representative. This person(s) serves to provide information about the union requirements of modified duties, monitors and assists in the creation of temporary accommodation positions, and acts responsibly on behalf of the worker in matters of seniority and job assignments. Worker representation will also serve to benefit the entire workplace community by acting as a liaison to the workforce by keeping co-workers and staff informed on the progress of the Committee.

Suggested HR and Provider Representatives

Depending on the size and needs of your organization, you may want to include a representative from your company's HR Department and/or a representative from the medical community on your Return-to-Work Committee.

An HR representative (or a staff safety employee) may serve on the committee to direct the company's case management activities. This member would maintain contact with the health care provider and the worker while maintaining a record-keeping and reporting system. This committee member would require a thorough knowledge of workers' compensation operations, have the ability to allocate resources to modify tasks or work sites, and have the responsibility of coordinating the final arrangements for alternative work assignments and of monitoring of the injured worker's progress. As stated earlier, the HR committee representative will be a member of the Return-to-Work team who should handle confidential medical information.

Additionally, your company may want to include a health care representative. You may already have a provider or occupational health nurse on staff, or the possibility may exist to obtain a volunteer from your company's workers' compensation panel. A direct medical representative would be an immense asset to your team as you prepare to interact with the medical community. This advisor can assist you with suggestions on form format, questions to ask, and follow-up advice. Additionally, if your company does not already have a provider's panel, these representatives can make suggestions on potential practitioners to consider during the development of your panel.

STEP 2 Develop a Return-to-Work Policy Statement

The Return-to-Work policy statement is a joint labor/management directive offering an introduction to the workforce of your company's Return-to-Work program. Your company's policy statement will be a point of reference throughout the entire development and maintenance of your Return-to-Work program as it sets the general scope and guideline for your program.

As the first tool that will be used to inform the workforce of your company's new Return-to-Work policy, a great deal of care should go into its development. Critical to the success of this approach with your workforce are the suggestions and guidance of a diverse Return-to-Work committee. Use your initial committee meetings as a forum opportunity to discuss ideas, concerns, and all the pertinent aspects of your program that need to be addressed in your policy statement.

Develop a Return-to-Work philosophy based on the following principles:

- Involve the work force (management, supervisors, and workers).
- Establish a joint employee/management committee.
- Always treat an injured or ill worker with dignity, consideration, and respect.
- Make a commitment to support the injured worker's medical treatment.
- Focus on a person's capabilities, not their disabilities.
- Make a commitment to endeavor to return injured workers to their original jobs as effectively as possible.
- Mandatory participation by both labor and management.

Please refer to the appendixes listed below containing samples to help guide your committee in the creation of your company's Return-to-Work policy.

*See: Appendix K - Sample Philosophy of a Return-to-Work Program
 Appendix L - Key Decision Points in Transitional Employment
 Appendix M - Return-to-Work Policy Statement Example
 Appendix N - Return-to-Work Policy Statement Example
 Appendix O - Return-to-Work Policy Statement Example*

SAMPLE PHILOSOPHY OF A RETURN-TO-WORK PROGRAM

EMPLOYEES ARE OUR MOST IMPORTANT ASSETS!

(Name of company) Return-To-Work Program is based on the assumption that there is nothing more important than our employees. When an employee loses time from his or her job, or is unable to return to work, everyone loses.

- The employee loses contact with his/her friends, relationships with coworkers, income, benefits and, most importantly, self-esteem, which is often so closely tied to employment.
- Our company loses a valuable employee.

OUR PROGRAM

To meet our goal of enabling employees to return to productive employment as rapidly as possible, our company takes the following steps:

- We try to meet with the treating provider at the employee's first medical appointment to discuss the physical demands of the employee's regular job, or the demands of alternative temporary tasks. Every effort is made to enable the employee to return to work either immediately or in the very near future.
- We staff the employee's case internally on a regular basis, contacting you regularly to see if an enhanced release can be obtained or whether alternate tasks or additional hours of duty can be approved safely.
- We meet with you immediately if permanent limitations of any kind are projected to determine if these will, in any way, affect the employee's ability to return to his or her regular job or to determine whether we need to consider permanent modifications or other alternatives.

Because everyone loses when an employee must be temporarily or permanently off the job, it stands to reason that everyone wins when employees are returned to work as quickly as medically possible and become productive, in even a small way, as soon as possible after injury.

YOUR ROLE

To achieve the goals of our Return-To-Work Program, we need you as our partner. We will communicate with you regularly. We will provide you with the best possible information about the physical demands of transitional duties available. We will let you know how the employee is doing on the job. We need timely information and communication from you. We need to know as quickly as possible the physical limitations you will be establishing for a safe return to work. We will utilize those restrictions in our Transitional Employment Plan. We need your comments about our company's Return-to-Work program that we provide to you. If there are permanent restrictions, we need your help to evaluate the employee's ability to return to his/her regular job or to evaluate modifications or alternate employment.

Should you have a question about (name of company) Return-To-Work Program, or concerning one of our employees, please call _____ (Name) at _____ (Telephone Number).

We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

KEY DECISION POINTS IN TRANSITIONAL EMPLOYMENT

The goal of the Return-To-Work Program is the safe, rapid return of our injured employees to transitional or regular employment. We believe that our employees' needs and the needs of (name of company) are best served when our employees are able to maintain some form of medically appropriate employment from the time they are injured until they are able to return to regular employment.

To achieve our goals, we must work together to ensure frequent communication and regular sharing of information. There are key junctures or decision points in what we call the "Transitional Employment" process when we need special input from you. These decision points are described below:

- 1. Day of Injury:** We aim to meet or contact you within 24 hours of the time one of our employees has a significant injury. In many cases, we hope to accompany our injured employees to the first medical appointment following injury. Our goal at that point will be to provide you with an analysis of your patient's regular job so you can make an informed decision about whether the employee can return to the position safely. Other alternatives may be discussed at the time, including temporary modifications to the employee's regular job if feasible, including reduced hours or changes in duties. If suitable alternate work is available--even if it is only for a couple of hours per day--we will attempt to provide it. Your ability to evaluate these opportunities at the time of the initial medical treatment is essential for successful management of each employee's injury and smooth return to productive employment.
- 2. Points of Medical Improvement:** During Transitional Employment we will evaluate every injured employee's case on a regular basis and considering all information provided regarding the employee's physical abilities. We will evaluate this information in terms of opportunities for return to regular or modified work.
- 3. When Permanent or Long-Term Limitations are Projected:** At some point, an employee will reach a time where you are able to project whether he/she is likely to have permanent or long-term limitations. At that point, even if an employee is not yet medically stable, we will consider the feasibility of permanent or long-term reasonable accommodations.
- 4. Point at Which Maximum Medical Improvement is Reached:** This is the point at which the employee has recovered as fully as possible. At this point, we will consider any permanent or long-term limitations and their impact on the employee's ability to return to his/her regular job.

If necessary, we will consider accommodations, including modification to the regular job or placement in suitable alternative vacant employment. Should the employee be unable to be accommodated, this would also be the point where we would consider such possibilities as vocational rehabilitation.

Your contact person for _____ is _____
Agency or Site Location Name, Title, Phone

Please call with any questions or concerns.

RETURN-TO-WORK POLICY STATEMENT EXAMPLE

Policy Statement Example

In fulfilling this company's commitment to provide a safe and healthy working environment, a Return-to-Work Program has been established for employees who have sustained an injury/illness.

(Name of Company) undertakes to accommodate the injured/ill employee through an early rehabilitation and placement where possible, to the benefit of both parties. This program provides gradual and consistent rehabilitation for employees.

(Name of Company) will work toward facilitating the injured/ill employee to an appropriate and timely return to work in the original position where they were employed at the same time of the injury/illness. If the original department is unable to place an employee in a suitable position, the company will try to identify an appropriate position in another department. All attempts to place the employee in another area must be done in cooperation with managers, workers, union representatives, and the employee.

Signature _____ Date _____

RETURN-TO-WORK POLICY STATEMENT EXAMPLE

(Name of Company) shall make every reasonable effort to provide suitable employment to any employee unable to perform his or her duties as a result of an injury or illness. This may include a modification to the employee's original position or providing an alternative position, depending on the employee's medical restrictions, providing that this does not create an undue hardship to the company. Only work that is considered to be meaningful and productive shall be considered for use in the Return-to-Work Program. Participants placed on the Return-to-Work plans will be expected to provide feedback in order to improve the program. All employees, regardless of injury or illness, will be considered for placement through the Return-to-Work Program.

Signature _____ **Date** _____

RETURN-TO-WORK POLICY STATEMENT EXAMPLE

It is the company's policy to make every reasonable effort to provide suitable alternative employment to an employee who is unable to perform his or her normal duties as a consequence of injury or illness.

Each department will attempt to accommodate employees who cannot perform the basic duties of their former positions. Where this is not possible, all departments will cooperate in meeting the company's policy of trying to locate suitable alternative employment.

Signature _____ **Date** _____

Step 3 **Develop Your Company's Provider Panel**

Provider Panel Defined:

The PA Workers' Compensation Act gives employers the right to establish a list of designated health care providers. When the list is properly posted, injured workers must seek treatment for the work injury or illness with one of the designated providers for 90 days from the date of the first visit. There are some specifics provided in the rules and regulations found in title 34 of the Pennsylvania Code for these lists.

If a designated list is established, the employer must provide a clearly written notice to an injured employee of the employee's rights and responsibilities. Section 127.755 of 34 Pa. Code provides specific instructions concerning when and how the notice is to be provided to the employee.

Employers may not require treatment with any one specific provider on the list, nor may the employer restrict the employee from switching from one designated provider to another designated provider. The employee is free to choose any provider on the list.

If there is an emergency situation, the employee is not required to obtain emergency treatment from a listed provider. However, once the emergency condition no longer exists, the injured employee shall seek treatment with a listed provider.

If an employer chooses not to establish a list of designated providers, the employee has the right to seek medical treatment from any provider of his or her choice.

Further details on the list of designated providers and its correct use are contained in Subchapter D, 34 Pa. Code Sections 127.751 through 127.755 of the rules and regulations found on page 196 of the Workers' Compensation Act as revised and reprinted in 1999.

Designated List of Health Care Providers

- the list must contain at least six providers
- three of the six providers must be physicians
- no more than four providers may be coordinated care organizations
- each provider's name, address, telephone number and area of medical specialty must be included on the list
- listed providers must be geographically accessible and their specialties appropriate for the anticipated work-related medical problems of the employees

Step 4 Conduct Job Task Analysis

Task analysis can be used to assess workstation and job design. In the Return-to-Work process, task analysis serves two functions:

- **Loss prevention:**
 - ✓ Analyze jobs and work stations to minimize or eliminate hazards that may cause injuries or illness;
 - ✓ Identify jobs and tasks that are particularly risky and make their redesign a priority; and
 - ✓ Avoid the accident before it happens.

- **Identification of alternate work assignments:**
 - ✓ Managers and workers will review existing job descriptions and perform task analysis on each using the task analysis checklist.

Task Analysis Checklist

Task analysis allows Return-to-Work team members to:

- ✓ Identify the root cause of unsafe conditions in the workplace;
- ✓ Prioritize workplace hazards so the worst problems can be addressed first;
- ✓ Make hazard prevention a part of new workplace design;
- ✓ Provide information to the health care provider treating the injured worker; and
- ✓ Determine the job modifications required to enable the worker to carry out job activities based on information provided by the health care provider.

Questions to be Included During a Job Task Analysis

- ✓ What activities are involved?
- ✓ What are the physical functions required?
- ✓ How frequently are they performed?
- ✓ What is the duration?
- ✓ What is a typical daily schedule?
- ✓ What equipment and tools are required?
- ✓ How are tools used?
- ✓ What postures are involved?
- ✓ What skills are required?
- ✓ What weights are lifted?
- ✓ How often are they lifted?

It is important that workers, as the people closest to day-to-day operations, participate in the preparation of task lists on their own jobs, and it is helpful if all members of the Return-to-Work team are familiar with the work environment. If feasible, conduct tests to quantify the force and exertion required to perform the duties of the job.

Additionally, the best time to conduct job analyses in your company is before a workplace injury or illness occurs. When a new employee is hired, or once a job task analysis is drafted for a current employee, have the employee sign off on the job task analysis before the injury occurs. This not only aids in the accuracy and consistency of the document but it also eases the burden of participating in a job analysis on the injured or ill employee during what could otherwise be a very difficult and confusing time.

An important thing to keep in mind is that your Job Task Analyses need to be kept up to date as the positions within your company change. It is very important to constantly review and update your records to ensure that they are accurate should you require them.

Appendix P - Job Description - Essential Functions

Appendix Q - Provider Examination Report

Appendix R - Return-to-Work Program Provider Form

JOB DESCRIPTION - ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

Job Title:

Essential Functions of the Job:

Physical Demand Classification:

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

REQUIREMENTS	% OF TIME	FORCES/ WEIGHT	REPETITIONS	DISTANCE/ HEIGHT	ITEMS	COMMENTS
	Occasional 0-33 Frequent 34-66 Cont. 67-100		Occasional 0-32 Frequent 33-200 Cont. 200			
Standing						
Sitting						
Driving						
Walking						
Lifting						
Carrying						
Pushing						
Pulling						
Squatting/Stooping						
Crawling						
Climbing ▪ Stairs ▪ Ladders						
Reaching ▪ Overhead ▪ Below						
Kneeling						
Bending ▪ Knees ▪ Elbows ▪ Torso/Back						
Hand Function ▪ Close Grasp ▪ Pinch ▪ Fine Manipulation						

WORK CONDITIONS

NOISE LEVEL	INSIDE	OUTSIDE	TEMPERATURE CHANGES:
WORKING HAZARDS:			EXPOSURE TO DUST, FUMES, GASES:
TOOLS USED FOR THE JOB:			
ACCOMMODATION AVAILABLE:			

PROVIDER EXAMINATION REPORT

Name: _____ Date of Exam: _____

Date of Injury: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Employer: _____ Occupation: _____

History as Related by Patient:

Are your findings consistent with history and type of injury? Yes No Unsure
 Is the injury work related? Yes No Unsure
 Are there any current conditions that may affect recovery? Yes No Unsure

Please Explain: _____

Diagnosis: _____

Treatment Plan: _____

Patient Status: _____ Return to work with restrictions (see below)
 _____ May return to full duty work
 _____ Unable to return to work

If unable to return to work full duty, anticipated date of return to full duty: _____

Work Status: (Circle the level of limitation if applicable)

Lifting:

- ___ Sedentary <10 lbs occasionally and up to 5 lbs frequently
- ___ Light 10-20 lbs occasionally and up to 10 lbs frequently
- ___ Medium 20-50 lbs occasionally and up to 20 lbs frequently
- ___ Heavy 50-100 lbs occasionally and up to 50 lbs frequently
- ___ Very Heavy >100 lbs occasionally and up to 100 lbs frequently

Bending	None	Occasional	Frequent	Constant
Squatting	None	Occasional	Frequent	Constant
Kneeling	None	Occasional	Frequent	Constant
Climbing	No fixed stairs	No Ladders		
Reach	Not with Right	Not with Left		
Grasping	Not with Right	Not with Left		
Pushing/Pulling	Not with Right	Not with Left		
Sit	None	Occasional	Frequent	Constant
Stand	None	Occasional	Frequent	Constant
Walk	None	Occasional	Frequent	Constant
Drive	None	Occasional	Frequent	Constant

Other: _____

Next Appointment Date and Time: _____

Health Care Provider Signature: _____ Date: _____

**RETURN-TO-WORK PROGRAM
PROVIDER FORM**

To: Health Care Provider

Subject: Employee: _____

From: Company Name

SS#: _____

We want to assist our employee and your patient to return to work as soon as possible and assist him/her in performing essential job functions at this institution. The information you provide on this form is vital and will be used for the following considerations:

- Allowing the employee to work without risk of further injury;
- Revision of a temporary assignment if necessary that meets the employee’s needs and the needs of this institution.
- Provision of any temporary reasonable accommodations to aid the employee in performing his/her duties.

The employee’s job description is attached for your consideration:

____ Regular Job Description ____ Temporary Assignment Job Description

If you have any questions regarding the information requested on this form, please contact:

Name & Title of Hosting Department Supervisor	Telephone Number
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TO BE COMPLETED BY HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

Considering this employee’s job duties and health condition, this employee may perform work in the following manner:

____ Full Duty (no restrictions)
 ____ Regular Job Description Beginning: _____

____ Less than Full Duty (some restrictions) Beginning: _____
 ____ Temporary Assignment Job Description

Additional Restrictions to Temporary Assignment Job Description should be noted on the Temporary Assignment Job Description.

____ Off Work until Re-evaluated by Provider Beginning: _____
 Next Office Visit Scheduled: _____

Health Care Provider’s Signature

Date

Step 5 Develop Suitable Alternative Work Assignments

Completed task analyses are used to identify jobs for returning injured workers. Work activities are designed to accommodate limitations such as restricted lifting, standing, walking, or sitting. Alternate work activity can be a modified version of the injured worker's original job, the same job with reduced hours, or a combination of tasks from other positions. It can be full or part time, but should be a time-limited assignment that is directed toward the injured worker's full return to his or her pre-accident job. The work must be productive and suitable to maintain the worker's sense of worth.

To identify alternate assignments, determine:

- What necessary tasks could the injured worker perform?
- What tasks, now performed occasionally, need to be done more frequently?
- What tasks could be assigned to someone else?

Be certain to know the physical and other demands of the alternate jobs or assignments that your company develops. It is essential that they match the limitations as prescribed by the injured worker's health care provider to ensure prevention of re-injury and the full rehabilitation of the employee.

During recovery, injured workers need their capabilities emphasized rather than their limitations. It is best to consult the employee's treating health care provider on what temporary work assignment would be best suited to the employee's needs and most beneficial to the rehabilitation process.

See: Appendix S - Examples of Accommodations

THE FOLLOWING LIST WILL HELP YOU IDENTIFY WAYS IN WHICH AN INJURED WORKER MIGHT BE ACCOMMODATED

Temporary Accommodation

Light Duties: Demand less physical exertion than pre-injury job. Worker's duties are limited according to the recommendations of the health care provider.

Lesser Duties: The worker performs reduced duties at a slower pace.

Alternate Duties/Tasks: Although the worker may be unable to perform regular duties, he or she may be able to perform other duties within his or her limitations. The worker must have the necessary skills and abilities to perform these duties competently and safely. A short-term skill development-training program to upgrade skills may be required.

Reduced Hours: The number of work hours may be reduced to match the worker's tolerance level.

Temporary Accommodation as Treatment: The employer may be asked by the health care provider to make certain additional modifications to the worker's job to accommodate the treatment process. These modifications include work hardening, extended therapy, and graduated duties.

Work Hardening: Work duties may be used as part of a conditioning and strengthening process. The work is designed to progressively increase the worker's physical ability until he or she is able to perform his or her regular duties.

Extended Therapy Program: The health care provider designs a treatment program incorporating actual work duties in a work setting. Under supervision, the worker's usual work duties are gradually added. This ensures that the duties are performed correctly and are within the worker's ability.

Graduated Return-to-Work Program: Work accommodations are made to allow the worker to return to work as soon as medically able and to gradually resume regular duties as recovery allows.

Permanent Accommodation

If it is determined that the injured worker is unable to return to his or her pre-accident duties, a permanent accommodation may be required. The employer may be asked to participate in identifying an appropriate job change. This may include training on the job and work assessment.

Training on the Job: The work site may be used to train an injured worker in a new job. Work is performed under the supervision of a qualified worker and the program is intended as preparation for a specific job. This program is most effective if a job is available with the training employer following the training period.

Work Assessment: The worker performs the job under supervision to evaluate if he or she has the ability to perform their job duties. This may be required prior to training on the job or enrolling in academic or technical training programs.

Step 6 Develop a Provider Form

A Provider form needs to be developed so that injured/ill workers can inform the treating provider of your company's Return-to-Work program and so the company can gather relevant information to find a suitable temporary job assignment for the employee.

Crucial in your consideration of provider forms is to first identify the information necessary to your needs. Once you know exactly what that information is, selection of the proper form, style, and content should follow.

Additionally, remember to consult medical community representatives that may be present on your Return-to-Work Committee or provider panel for their advice and counsel. The first-hand knowledge and experiences that these individuals bring to the table will truly ease the provider form creation process.

*See: Appendix T - Letter to Health Care Provider About Return-to-Work
 Appendix U - Return-to-Work Program Temporary Assignment Job
 Description*

LETTER TO HEALTH CARE PROVIDER ABOUT RETURN-TO-WORK

Dear _____:

(Name of Company) is committed to returning injured or ill employees to work within their capabilities. We believe that an employee who returns to work as soon as medically appropriate, and within his or her work restrictions, regains economic security, physical strength and flexibility, and has improved psychological well-being.

I am writing to ask for your opinion concerning Mr./Ms. _____'s ability to return to work at this time. Enclosed is an analysis of Mr./Ms. _____'s regular job (and/or proposed Transitional Employment Plan). Based on your review of the enclosed Return-to-Work Program (and/or proposed transitional employment plan) and your examination of Mr./Ms. _____, please choose one or more of the following:

I release the employee to the job as described in the Return-to-Work Program (or proposed Transitional Employment Plan) effective _____.

I release the employee to the activities as described under the following conditions:

I cannot release the employee to any part of the duties described at this time.

An appointment to review the employee's condition further is scheduled for _____.

Provider's Name _____ Date _____

Please feel free to provide any additional comments you have concerning Mr./Ms. _____'s ability to work.

Thank you for your assistance with this matter.

Sincerely,

Enclosure (Your Company name) Return-to-Work Program Details (and/or other attachments)

RETURN-TO-WORK PROGRAM TEMPORARY ASSIGNMENT JOB DESCRIPTION

Employee Name: _____ Hosting Department/Location: _____
 Position Name: _____ Effective Date: _____

Essential Functions: (*Health Care Provider:* Indicate if the employee can/cannot perform the essential function listed by circling yes or no. *Supervisor:* List essential job functions.)

_____	Yes	No

Physical Requirements: (*Supervisor:* Check those that apply to job described above. *Health Care Provider:* Check yes or no)

<u>Requirement:</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Requirement:</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
___ Lifting			___ Walking		
___ Moderate (15-45 lbs)			___ Standing		
___ Light (up to 15 lbs)			___ Sitting		
___ Carrying			___ Crawling		
___ Heavy (45 lbs and up)			___ Twisting		
___ Moderate (15-45 lbs)			___ Pushing		
___ Light (up to 15 lbs)			___ Stooping		
___ Reaching above shoulders			___ Kneeling		
___ Straight pulling			___ Ability to read		
___ Pulling hand over hand			___ Ability to type		
___ Dual simultaneous grasping			___ Ability to write		
___ Operating mechanical equipment			___ Hearing		
Specify _____			___ Speaking		
___ Operating office equipment			___ Climbing stairs		
Specify _____			___ Simple grasp		
___ Operating a motor vehicle			___ Repeated bending		
___ Other: _____					

Additional Recommendations/Restrictions: (*Health Care Provider:* List if applicable)

Health Care Provider Signature: _____ Date: _____
 Health Care Provider Printed Name: _____
 Approval of Hosting Department: _____ Date: _____

STEP 7 Communicate Policy to Workforce

It is strongly suggested that all employees be notified of every new policy in writing. The policy statement should then be signed and dated by the employee and filed into the corresponding personnel file. This is not only a good practice for the Return-to-Work program, but also for every personnel transaction, policy change, or creation. Having all employees sign and date all changes and additions serves to reinforce that all employees are aware of workplace policies, practices, and procedures.

Additionally, if you work in a union environment, you must first remember to confer with the union before posting the new policy. This is another aspect where the importance of having union representation on your Return-to-Work Committee is so pivotal as to how your policy will be received by the workforce.

Once the policy has been formally introduced, it should be posted in a visible area of the workplace. Posting the policy will serve not only as a reminder but also as reinforcement of management's commitment to the program. It will also allow for the policy to be easily and conveniently referenced should the need arise.

Step 8 Educate The Workforce

The key to the success of a Return-to-Work program is partnership among workers, employers, and health care providers, and a shared commitment to the goal of returning injured workers to employment.

Proper education of your workforce will:

- Make everyone in the workplace aware of the principles and practice of the Return-to-Work program.
- Educate supervisors and workers about the needs of injured co-workers returning to the work environment.
- Make everyone aware of the benefits of a Return-to-Work program. This can be achieved by:
 - ✓ Providing employee orientation to introduce the Return-to-Work program and explaining how the company will respond if a worker is injured;
 - ✓ Providing ongoing education;
 - ✓ Displaying posters of the mission statement or policy;
 - ✓ Putting information about the Return-to-Work program in the employee newsletter;
 - ✓ Providing sensitivity training to help co-workers generally understand the needs of injured co-workers;
 - ✓ Providing support and education to the injured worker's family;
 - ✓ And finally, the Return-to-Work team should educate injured workers on their new tasks or modified jobs, and explain the importance of staying within the provider's guidelines.

See: *Appendix V - Return-to-Work for Stakeholders PowerPoint Presentation*
Appendix W - Return-to-Work for Management PowerPoint Presentation
Appendix X - Return-to-Work for Employees PowerPoint Presentation



Return-to-Work

Stakeholders

For Pennsylvania
Business and
Industry



What is Return-to-Work?

Return-to-Work is the proactive approach, endorsed by many health care providers, designed to help restore injured workers to their former lifestyle in the safest and most effective manner possible.



Return-to-Work Management

The simultaneous coordination of:

- Health Care Services
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Claims Development

In the most caring and cost effective manner possible.



Why Introduce Return-to-Work?

- Workplace injuries, illnesses, and accidents are costly to employers, workers, and the compensation partnership
- R-T-W promotes communication and establishes the role of each participant
- R-T-W programs benefit all partners in the compensation system



Costs of Absences

To Workforce:

- Dealing with replacement workers
- Increased benefit costs
- Loss of potential income



Costs of Absences

To Employer:

- Recovery of production
- Quality and hiring of replacement workers
- Lower morale
- Increased training costs
- Overtime
- Non-productive work time
- Increased premiums
- Other non-recoverable costs



Return-to-Work Outcomes

- Reduce financial burdens on employers, workers, and workers' families
- Reduce workers' length of time off work
- Assists unions in protecting employment rights of members
- Allows health care staff to develop more specialized treatment plans
- Provides opportunity for all parties to participate in the Return-to-Work decision



Employer Benefits By:

- Reducing staff turnover and training costs
- Retaining experienced and knowledgeable workers
- Minimizing non-recoverable expenses
- Improving accident experience
- Decreasing the number of grievances and arbitrations
- Improving morale and employee relations



Worker Benefits by:

- Maintaining the employment relationship
- Maintaining vacation and sick leave
- Maintaining social contact and support from co-workers
- Reducing the amount of time for recovery
- Maintaining financial credibility
- Focusing on their abilities, not disabilities
- Maintaining necessary job skills



Union Benefits by:

- Preserving jobs, seniority, and benefits for injured workers
- Promoting cooperative labor/management relations
- Increasing awareness that the union is there to protect workers' interest and well being
- Decreasing the number of grievances and arbitrations



Health Care Professionals Benefit by:

- Providing focused and coordinated treatment for the injured/ill worker
- Using the cooperative approach, which allows for more efficient use of health care resources directed towards a specific goal . . .

The return to work of an injured/ill worker!



Benefits to All Stakeholders

- Restores employee to workplace as part of his or her recovery program
- R-T-W maximizes treatments
- Injured employee experiences quicker recovery
- Minimizes long-term workers' compensation costs



So Begin Plans for Your Return-to-Work Program Today!



The End



Return-to-Work Management

For Pennsylvania
Business and
Industry



What is Return-to-Work?

Return-to-Work is the proactive approach, endorsed by many health care providers, designed to help restore injured workers to their former lifestyle in the safest and most effective manner possible.



Return-to-Work Management

The simultaneous coordination of:

- Health Care Services
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Claims Development

In the most caring and effective manner possible.



Why Introduce Return-to-Work?

- Workplace injuries, illnesses, and accidents are costly to employers, workers, and the compensation partnership
- R-T-W promotes communication and establishes the roles of each participant
- R-T-W programs benefit all partners in the compensation system



Costs of Absences

To Workforce:

- Dealing with replacement workers
- Increased benefit costs
- Loss of potential income



Costs of Absences

To Employer:

- Recovery of production
- Quality and hiring of replacement workers
- Lower morale
- Increased training costs
- Overtime
- Non-productive work time
- Increased premiums
- Other non-recoverable costs



Management Responsibilities

(prior to incident)

- Keep subordinates informed on the development of your company's Return-to-Work program
- Participate with R-T-W Committee on Job Task Analysis
- Answer questions and make referrals on R-T-W inquiries



Management Responsibilities

Immediately upon the report of an accident or injury.

- Seek medical attention
- If necessary, get injured or ill worker to the hospital
- Remain calm and in control



Management Responsibilities (Continued)

- Notify personnel (and all other necessary departments) of the incident
- Notify workers' compensation carrier
- Conduct accident investigation
- Take necessary actions to prevent recurrence of the incident
- Maintain communication with employee and his or her family



Management Benefits By:

- Reducing staff turnover and training costs
- Retaining experienced and knowledgeable workers
- Minimizing non-recoverable expenses
- Improving accident experience
- Decreasing the number of grievances and arbitrations
- Improving morale and employee relations



Worker Benefits by:

- Maintaining the employment relationship
- Maintaining vacation and sick leave
- Maintaining social contact and support from co-workers
- Reducing the amount of time for recovery
- Maintaining financial credibility
- Focusing on their abilities, not disabilities
- Maintaining necessary job skills



Union Benefits by:

- Preserving jobs, seniority, benefits for injured workers
- Promoting cooperative labor/management relations
- Increasing awareness that the union is there to protect workers' interest and well being
- Decreasing the number of grievances and arbitrations



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Return-to-Work

Employee

For Pennsylvania
Business and
Industry



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Return-to-Work Management

The simultaneous coordination of:

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Employee Responsibilities

- Notify Employer / Supervisor at time of injury
- Make arrangements for medical care with a Panel Provider, if necessary
- Communicate with Supervisor on your progress and needs



Employee Responsibilities (Continued)

- Work with Return-to-Work Committee and your treating health care provider on R-T-W plan
- Participate in Alternative Work Assignment
- Maintain a positive outlook
- Return to pre-injury status
- Schedule and attend regular appointments



Worker Benefits by:

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- Maintaining social contact and support from co-workers
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- Maintaining financial credibility
- Focusing on their abilities, not disabilities
- Maintaining necessary job skills



Injured Worker's Family Benefits by:

- Continuing income
- Reducing medical expenses
- Reducing impact on family relations



Co-Workers Benefit by:

- Improving productivity by keeping skilled and productive workers on the job
- Improving accident experience
- Benefiting from opportunity to have meaningful alternative duties completed that might otherwise not have been completed



Union Benefits by:

- Preserving jobs, seniority, benefits for injured workers
- Promoting cooperative labor/management relations
- Increasing awareness that the union is there to protect workers' interest and well being
- Decreasing the number of grievances and arbitrations



Benefits to All

- Restores employees to workplace as part of his or her recovery program
- R-T-W maximizes treatments
- Injured employees experience quicker recoveries
- Minimizes long-term workers' compensation costs



Consequences to Employees

Potential consequences to employees opting not to participate in your company's Return-to-Work Program include:

- Increased medical expenses associated with increased time out of the workplace
- Time away from work
- Inability to keep up with necessary job skills in a competitive market
- Loss of socialization with co-workers



So Begin Plans To Join Your Company's Return-to-Work Program Today!



The End

Step 9 Inform Stakeholders of Responsibilities

The next steps in a Return-to-Work Program take place after an injury has occurred and involve developing and managing an individual Return-to-Work plan.

After an injury occurs, all the partners in the Return-to-Work process are responsible for the Return-to-Work of the injured worker. The breakdown of responsibilities is as follows.

Employer

- Provide immediate support to the injured worker and family;
- Maintain fact finding only – not fault finding – when conducting the accident investigation and documenting circumstances surrounding the injury;
- Review the accident investigation report and address any job related issues;
- Develop a Return-to-Work plan with the injured worker and the health care provider;
- Communicate early with the health care provider and the injured worker about return-to-work opportunities;
- Provide a concise and accurate task list to the health care provider to assess the worker's suitability for a position;
- Maintain communication with the injured worker and the health care provider about the progress of the individual;
- Provide detailed job descriptions and make temporary and permanent accommodations for injured workers; and
- Monitor the injured worker's progress both during treatment and during his or her return to work.

Health Care Providers

- Operate from a team approach and treat all the effects of the injury, recognizing the possible psychological impact of the injury, where related;
- Make an initial diagnosis, identify appropriate treatment strategies and make a realistic prognosis about when the worker will be able to return to work;
- Focus on the injured worker's recovery and advise the worker and the employer when a return to work is medically appropriate;
- Contribute medical knowledge to the Return-to-Work plan;
- Identify other factors that may inhibit the injured worker's return to work. Communicate any potential work place risks that may effect the injured employee's return to work developing and fostering open communication between all partners. Make certain to follow-up with appropriate and prompt intervention ; and
- Tailor each treatment plan so it is medically appropriate.

Injured Worker

- Obtain medical treatment;
- Provide information and influence the design of the individual plan;
- Follow the treatment plan as closely as possible; and
- Keep in regular contact with employer to communicate about progress and needs.

Union or Worker Representative

- Participate with the employer and the injured worker to develop an appropriate work plan. One that is sensitive to the needs of the injured worker; and
- Represent the injured worker in matters of job security, appropriate treatment, and re-employment assignments.