



Return-to-Work Implementation Guide

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STEP 1: Guidelines of an official Return-to-Work policy

Return-to-Work (modified/light duty) policy sample guidelines

1. Purpose
2. Applicability
3. Policy effective date
4. Policy contact(s)
5. General policy
6. Responsibilities
 - a. Employee
 - b. Return-to-work team or person
 - c. Supervisor
 - d. Carrier
7. General procedures and controls
8. Appendices

STEP 2: Demonstrate a commitment to early return-to-work

Foundational principles of a successful Return-To-Work program:

1. An effective program creates worthwhile modified job duties for all employees that have been released to return-to-work on restrictions, whether work-related or for non-work-related reasons.
2. All employees should understand that return-to-work quickly and safely, accelerates the recovery process and decreases the likelihood of permanent disability.
3. It is beneficial to both the injured employee and the company.
4. It keeps the employee active and switches the mindset of disability to ability.
5. It is an effective strategy to retain valued employees, provide security and stability, enhance productivity, and impact your bottom line favorably.
6. A Return-To-Work policy shows you are committed to returning employees to work and value their well-being.

STEP 3: Define goals

- State the purpose of the Return-to-Work program.
- Keep it positive and understandable.
- Emphasize management's commitment and sincerity.
- Define what type of duty is available, whether transitional/modified duty, alternate duty, or both.

Sample Goal Statement:

[Company Name]'s Return-to-Work program is committed to our employee's well-being. The Return-to-Work program is designed to assist an injured workers recovery by identifying new duties or modifying tasks to meet their physical capabilities in compliance with the authorized doctor's restrictions. The primary goal is to return injured employees safely to productive work, regular schedule and full wages as soon as possible. The employee will be placed in an appropriate transitional assignment for a specified time period that will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. The injured worker will be continuously monitored by his/her supervisor and medical care provider until determined fit to return to original work duties. We offer a transitional duty program and an alternate duty program. The transitional duty program is designed to accelerate return-to-work by addressing physical limitations within current job duties. Alternate duty is placement in another position temporarily until the authorized doctor assesses they are able to perform the functions of their pre-injury job.

STEP 4: Establish a return-to-work team or person and their responsibilities

A dedicated return to work team or person is vital to the program's success.

- Sets expectations for injured employees.
- Acts as a communication channel between all involved parties.
- Ensures the Return-to-Work program is being administered correctly.

If establishing a team, you may want to include an HR representative, a supervisor, and a member of senior management to promote and support the program.

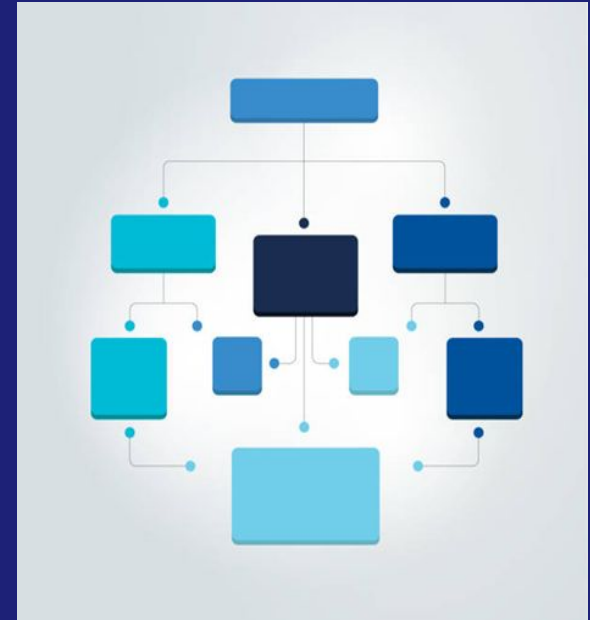
Define the roles and responsibilities of all involved parties.

1. Who should be notified of the injury?
2. Who is responsible for reporting the claim?
3. Who will follow up on appointments, restrictions and any issues?
4. Who will communicate with providers proactively about light duty availability?
5. Who will manage the job duty bank and coordinate return-to-work?
6. Who will notify the claims adjuster about the injured worker's work status and return-to-work?

STEP 5: Create a flow chart summarizing the return-to-work process

An effective workflow chart:

- Eliminates confusion.
- Identifies the required actions and responsibilities of all employees.
- Serves as an action plan.



STEP 6: Develop and maintain a modified/alternate duty job bank

- The job bank is essentially a list of tasks or positions that vary by physical demand requirements to satisfy any level of restrictions from sedentary to minimal restrictions.
- Consider creating a temporary sedentary position with no physical requirements, such as a “door greeter”, to allow sufficient time to find an appropriate placement and alleviate any lost time from work.
- Encourage all employees to submit ideas, tasks or projects in need of extra assistance, overlooked, or that are short-staffed, such as inventory, reviewing old documents/files, updating plans or manuals.
- Organize the bank by physical demand level, location and departments to find the most appropriate assignments quickly.
- If at all possible, keep work hours and distance the same as the injured employee’s pre-injury location to promote compliance and not creating a burden.

STEP 7: Formulate a communication and education plan

- Discuss the Return-to-Work program with “new hires” during orientation, and with all employees periodically throughout the year.
- Make accessible any written program definitions and descriptions in understandable formats and in appropriate languages.
- Maintain job descriptions and physical requirements for positions and make them available to employees.
- Communicate with a new injured employee within 24 hours.
 - Discuss their rights, responsibilities, return-to-work and answer any questions or concerns.
- Maintain frequent contact with injured employees to reiterate expectations, responsibilities, ensure compliance with restrictions and address any concerns or issues.
- Celebrate any program accomplishments and communicate success stories.

Step 8: Measure success

Examples of Key Performance Indicators

- Track the number of injured employees that are assigned modified/alternate duties through the Return-to-Work program to determine the percentage of participation.
- Calculate the average duration of modified duty assignments.
- Quantify the financial savings on each injured employee in the program.



STEP 9: Implement your Return-to-Work program

- Before implementation, we recommend any written language and Return-to-Work processes/program be reviewed by your Employment Practice attorney.
- Include the Return-to-Work policy in your Employee Handbook so that all employees know what to expect and what their responsibilities are in the process.
 - Provide a section for each employee to sign and date the document acknowledging receipt and understanding.
 - Keep signed document on file for each employee.
- Determine how you want to initially communicate the program and what course of action is best for your company.
 - Consider scheduling a webinar or onsite meetings to build support for the program and allow employees to ask questions and to sign and date acknowledgement.
- Review the Return-to-Work program annually to evaluate written procedures, make necessary adjustments, update the policy and review with all employees.




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Thank You