

What is a Return to Work Program

Return to work simply means helping
your employee get back to work as
soon as medically possible after a job-
related injury or illness

Why Introduce Return to Work

- Keeping your employees connected with the workplace is both good medicine and good business.
- Workplace injuries, illnesses and accidents are costly to both employers and workers.
- RTW promotes communication and establishes the role of each participant.

Research shows:

- That unnecessarily prolonged work disability and loss of employability causes devastating psychological, medical, social and economic effects.
- That return to work facilitates better recovery, leads to less time off work for the injured worker, and lowers workers' compensation costs for the employers.

RTW is a shared Team Responsibility

- The Team:
- Employer
- Employee
- Physician (Health Care Providers)
- Carrier
- Union Representative and
- Claimant Attorney (if any)

Team Players Roles & Benefits

Employers Role:

- Commitment from the business owner and/or top management for successful RTW Program.
- Education of management and employees on RTW policy.
- Communication with all team players.
- Accountability by all team players

Employers Benefits

RTW programs reduce:

- - Duration of lost time
- - Workers compensation insurance premium, experience mod factor and self insurance bonds
- - Litigation
- - Worker replacement cost and productivity costs
- - Loss of experienced employees

Employees' Role and Benefits

- Report any injury immediately to your supervisor
- Get medical attention
- Inform your treating doctor that return to work opportunities are available to accommodate your physical abilities
- When your doctor releases you to return to work, report directly to your employer
- Follow your doctor's orders and restrictions at home and at work

Benefits for Injured Worker

- Maintains Income
- Retains productive employment and security
- Reduces personal, social and economical problems
- Retains employer pensions and benefit packages.

Physician Role

- Provide appropriate, effective medical treatment that facilitates recovery and expedites return to productive work
- Treat all the effects of the injury, recognizing the possible psychological impact of the injury
- Work with the injury worker and employer to encourage appropriate RTW opportunities
- File all prescribed forms and reports with the WCB and insurance carrier in a timely fashion

Physician Benefit

- A physician can positively affect the likelihood and rapidity of healing by establishing clear expectations for recovery with the injured worker and providing appropriate guidance to the injured worker and his or her employer.

Union Representative Role

- Participate in RTW Committee meetings and Individual RTW Plan development
- Continuously monitor participants' progress in RTW program

Union Benefits

- Preserve jobs, seniority and benefits for injured workers
- Promote cooperative labor/management relations
- Increase awareness that the union is there to protect workers' interest and well-being

Attorney/Licensed Representative Role

- Encourage and actively assist injured workers with successfully returning to work
- Work with employer to encourage appropriate RTW opportunities
- Continuously monitor participants' progress in the RTW program

Successful RTW processes which demonstrate the best results:

- Take charge of the employment process from the onset of injury.
- Inform treating physicians that the employer has a temporary transitional work program.
- Make clear to the injured worker and treating physician that the employer can provide work within a wide range of functional abilities which will be consistent with any guidelines set by the doctor
- Ask physicians to provide physical capacities restrictions and limitations, rather than nebulous “RTW” dates

The Bottom Line Is...

- The longer your employee is away from work, the more it costs you and the worse it is for your injured employee.

RTW resources on the Board's web site:

- Return to Work Handbook
- Communications Guide
- Return to Work FAQ
- Subject Number 046-309

• www.wcb.state.ny.us