Return to work

Guide to scheduling and planning the return-to-work meeting

This guide outlines the procedure for how to schedule, conduct and take follow-up actions for a collaborative return-to-work planning meeting. Although a formal collaborative return to work meeting is not always possible, or required, depending on circumstance, effective return-to-work planning requires collaboration of all partners: the worker, the employer, the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) and the health-care provider as needed.

A collaborative return-to-work discussion should take place as early as possible after the injury either by phone call or a meeting. In these calls or meetings, the WCB may facilitate to ensure the employer and worker are engaged in the discussion about return to work and ideas are elicited from both parties regarding what the return to work could look like.

Steps for scheduling a meeting to discuss return to work:

- The worker is to contact their employer as soon as possible after their initial medical appointment to advise if the health-care provider has identified abilities/restrictions.
- If there are restrictions, the worker is to report to work for their next scheduled shift, and to bring the completed medical abilities/restrictions form with them.
- If the worker is hospitalized, and/or restrictions are such that the worker is unable to report to work for their next scheduled shift, the employer is to establish contact with the worker.
- The employer is to schedule a collaborative return-to-work planning meeting with the worker and, where appropriate the WCB and other partners as required (for example: health care providers, union, return-to-work co-ordinators) at the beginning of their next shift. Alternatively, the WCB may initiate a collaborative return-to-work planning meeting if it is identified the worker has not returned to work.
- The worker is to be actively engaged in developing their return-to-work plan.
- If the worker is medically unable to report to their next scheduled shift, the employer should communicate at least weekly with them until they can start a return-to-work plan. If the worker is medically able and fails to report to work and/or the collaborative return-to-work planning meeting, it is the responsibility of the employer to immediately contact the worker and then inform the WCB.

At the return to work planning meeting:

- Review the medical abilities/restrictions outlined by the health-care provider.
- Follow the employer's process for identifying and discussing suitable modified work options within the worker's medical abilities/restrictions.
- Agree on the modified work that will be part of the worker's return-to-work plan.
- Document the return to work plan on the return-to-work plan form.

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Responsibilities of the employer*

***This can be the supervisor, the return-to-work co-ordinator or whoever is responsible for the return-to-work planning.**

- Assign responsibility for ensuring any modifications and/or assistive aids/equipment required to implement the return-to-work plan are put in place. Who is responsible for what, when and how is to be documented as part of the return-to-work plan.
- Ensure the agreed upon documented return-to-work plan is dated and signed by the worker and management position or person.
- Discuss what, if any, information about the worker's return-to-work plan (for example, return date, assigned work duties within abilities/restrictions, dates return-to-work plan is in effect, scheduled workdays and work hours) will be shared with affected coworkers.
- Assure the worker that confidential medical information (medical diagnosis, medical treatments/appointments) will not be shared with coworkers unless required, and only with the worker's consent.
- Identify who will be responsible for monitoring the worker's return-to-work plan and providing the worker with information on the return-to-work monitoring process.
- Remind the worker that the return-to-work plan will be in place for a defined time frame and amended if needed to reflect any changes in the workers medical abilities/restriction.
- Inform the worker that if, during their return-to-work plan, they experience any problems, they are to stop work and immediately report to their supervisor/manager.
- Remind the worker to have their health-care provider give an updated medical abilities/restrictions form if they are experiencing problems and/or their medical abilities/restrictions change, and to return the completed form to their employer.
- Remind the worker that they must work within their current abilities/restrictions and agreed return-to-work plan.
- Provide the worker with information as to how the worker will be paid during the return-to-work plan as relates to any work time lost due to the injury and treatment plan.

Following the completion of the return-to-work planning meeting:

- The employer must provide the worker and immediate supervisor(s) with a copy of the documented return-to-work plan before the return to work starts.
- A copy of the documented return-to-work plan should be forwarded (if not already) to the WCB and the health-care provider following the meeting. The WCB would also require a copy of the medical abilities/restrictions form for their file.
- The employer and/or the worker is to contact the WCB if there are any concerns or problems with the adjustments/changes made to the worker's return-to-work plan.