Return to work

Guide to the collaborative return-to-work process

This guide outlines the steps to take**:**

- when there is an absence due to the work injury
- to initiate the return-to-work plan
- to monitor a return-to-work plan
- if there are concerns with the return-to-work plan
- after completing the return-to-work plan

When the worker is absent due to a work injury

The employer is to:

- Immediately inform the necessary people (that is, managers, supervisors) if the worker is at any time medically unable to return to the workplace.
- Establish and maintain at least weekly contact with the worker for any period of time they are unable to return to the workplace.
- Collaborate with the worker, the Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) and the health-care provider as appropriate to jointly develop a return-to-work plan based on the worker's abilities/restrictions.
- Communicate updates to the WCB about any changes in the worker's ability to return to work.

Day one of the return-to-work plan

The supervisor/manager is responsible for:

- Welcoming the worker back to the workplace.
- Reviewing the return-to-work plan developed in the collaborative return-to-work planning meeting and reviewing these expectations with the worker:
    - The worker and the supervisor/manager are responsible for abiding by the abilities/restrictions outlined in the return-to-work plan.
    - The worker is to immediately report concerns with their return-work-plan to their supervisor/manager or other assigned point of contact.
    - The worker is to follow their medical treatment plan and contact the employer and the WCB immediately if their health-care provider updates abilities/restrictions so that the return-to-work plan can be updated.
    - The worker is to participate in any collaborative return-to-work planning meetings with the employer as needed in response to updated abilities/restrictions.

Ongoing monitoring of the return-to-work plan

The employer is responsible for:

- Directly monitoring and supporting the worker on their return-to-work plan.
- Ensuring the health and well-being of the worker and that no type of discrimination or harassment occurs.
- Ensuring the worker and their supervisor/manager adhere to the abilities/restrictions identified in the return-to-work plan.
- Providing training and job coaching if the worker is learning/performing new work tasks.
- Checking in with the worker daily, as the return-to-work plan progresses. If the plan is going well, decrease to twice per week, then once per week. Use the return-to-work proactive worksheet to document the meeting, store the information and/or forward the worksheet to the appropriate person.
- Completing the job information worksheet, which outlines the worker's pre-injury job position. This form is to be completed with the worker collaboratively.

Addressing concerns during the return-to-work plan

- The employer must ensure the worker is performing their job duties/tasks safely and that they are not at risk for any further injury.
- If the worker or the employer identifies a concern with the worker's return-to-work plan, the employer is to meet with the worker immediately to discuss the concern/problem.
- The employer is to immediately schedule a collaborative return-to-work meeting to address any concerns with the return-work-plan and document on the return-to-work proactive worksheet. It is important that the employer contacts the WCB with the changes to the worker's return-to-work plan after the meeting. This is to ensure all collaborating partners have the updated/correct information.
- There may be times when the employer encounters difficulties in returning a worker to suitable modified/alternate work in a timely manner and may require the WCB's assistance. Examples of when an employer should contact the claims entitlement specialist or the customer care facilitator at the WCB include:
    - The employer has concerns or questions about the need for additional medical abilities/restrictions to determine suitable return-to-work options.
    - The employer has questions or concerns about a worker's ability to return to work and/or limited return-to-work options available.
    - An employer has offered a worker modified/alternate work within the worker's abilities, but the worker is not prepared to accept the work.
    - The worker is refusing to take the employer's medical abilities/restrictions form to their health-care provider.
    - The worker's health-care provider is refusing to complete the employer's medical abilities/restrictions form and/or provide a "total time off work" note.

Follow up after the completion of the return-to-work plan

- The employer is to follow up with the worker after the completion of their return-to-work plan to ensure there are no ongoing concerns/problems.