

Early and Safe Return to Work Policy

PURPOSE

Redacted values the goal of injury and illness prevention through maintaining a safe and healthy workplace. Consistent with this value is the company's commitment to the successful recovery of injured and ill employees by assisting in early intervention and reintegration to safe work, in compliance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act, Ontario Human Right's Code and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

SCOPE

An Early and Safe Return to Work Program is designed to assist injured and ill employees to make an early and safe return to their regular duties. It is a temporary measure that is intended to bridge the gap between injury/illness and return to full duties. The modified duties will not normally last longer than twelve weeks.

Every case will be assessed on an individual basis with the support of the involved employee, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, Physician, Human Resources Department, the Manager or Supervisor of the department, and in the case of unionized employees – CAW representation if requested by the employee.

DEFINITIONS

Modified Work

Modified work/duties are a means of accommodating an employee's temporary restrictions while they fully convalesce. It will involve job functions that an employee with a temporary, partial disability may perform safely without unreasonable risk of re-injury or unreasonable risk to others. The work must be productive and must have value for both the employee and the company. Associates on modified work will still be subject to layoff situations when labour demand changes within the facility. Unionized employees should refer to Collective Agreement Article XII – Layoff and Recall.

A broad approach to accommodation will be adopted that recognizes the unique circumstances in each case. Modified work tasks will be assigned in the following order:

1. Own job first;
2. Within own focus factory area;
3. Outside of classification (without affecting staffing/work levels);
4. Anywhere in the plant to an existing job.

Additional accommodations (where medically required) can include:

- Working fewer hours;
- Taking more frequent rest breaks;
- Obtaining assistance from a co-worker for more difficult tasks;
- Job/responsibility-sharing;
- Physical changes to the work environment;
- Assistive devices;
- Assignment to another job;
- Special project work.

Return to Work Plan (RTWP)

A Return to Work Plan (RTWP) is a document detailing the specific work assignment that the injured/ill employee is to assume upon their return to work. The RTW plan shall include the number of weeks of modified duties, hours of work, tasks to be performed, breaks, and any job assistance to be provided, and may be developed in conjunction with the CAW if required.

Periodic Review

Human Resources and the employee will review the employee's activities (in conjunction with the ESRTW Plan and WSIB) once per week while the employee is on a suitable work assignment. This review shall be documented on the *Return To Work Progress Report*.

POLICY

It is the policy of *Redacted* to take all reasonable steps to return injured and ill employees to their pre-injury job as quickly as possible. Where the employee is unable to return to their pre-injury position, the goal will be to return them to alternative work that is consistent with their functional abilities.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

This program is designed to provide the following outcomes:

- Increased awareness of disability issues for all employees;
- Reduction in days lost due to absences from injuries and illness;
- A fair and consistent process for employees returning to work;
- Compliance with current and future legislative obligations;
- Reduced Worker's Compensation costs;
- Every return to work shall be used as a prevention opportunity.

RESPONSIBILITIES

EMPLOYEE:

- Report all work-related injuries or illness to the immediate supervisor as soon as possible after the injury occurs;
 - Obtain necessary paperwork from supervisor (Modified Work Treatment Memorandum/Functional Abilities Form) prior to seeking medical attention;
 - Advise the treating physician of the availability of modified duties;
 - Return Functional Abilities Form to Human Resources on the same day or next-day depending on the severity of the injury;
 - Maintain regular contact with the supervisor and keep advised of any changes in the medical condition throughout the period of the employee's impairment and recovery;
 - Actively participate in developing a specific Return to Work plan by helping to identify suitable employment that is available and consistent with the employee's functional abilities;
 - Communicate any difficulties or concerns regarding the duties provided to the immediate supervisor or Human Resources.
- Failure of the employee to cooperate and take an active role in return to work may cause a decrease or suspension of benefits provided by the WSIB.

SUPERVISOR:

- Investigate the injury or illness;
- Take preventative measures to ensure it does not happen again;
- Ensure immediate completion of accident or incident report;
- Work with Human Resources and the employee to design the RTW plan;
- Meet with the returning employee at the start and end of the first shift to review and discuss any concerns the employee may have.

HUMAN RESOURCES:

- Maintain regular contact with the employee during his or her absence from work;
- Liaise with WSIB personnel;
- Maintain progress chart or documentation relating to employee's injury;
- Respect the dignity and confidentiality of the individual with a disability;
- Co-ordinate the development of the employee's return to work plan;
- Liaise with the department staff to discuss the required accommodation/assistance;
- Attend regularly scheduled meetings with the employee during the work plan to discuss progress;
- Liaise with other managers in order to develop RTW program opportunities;
- Evaluate the modified work program every year, to determine its effectiveness, and provide monthly reports to management.

CO-WORKERS:

- Provide support and encouragement to the employee participating in the RTW program;
- Provide direct assistance for specifically designated tasks on a temporary basis.

DEVELOPMENT OF INDIVIDUALIZED RETURN TO WORK PLANS

The Return to Work Plan shall be developed by Human Resources in conjunction with the employee, treating Physician or health professional, Manager or Supervisor, and CAW representative if requested by the employee.

Where practicable, the Return to Work Plan shall include:

- The goals of the plan - These goals set out milestones for the worker to achieve until they reach the final goal: a return to pre-injury employment;
- Actions required to achieve these goals. This includes the responsibilities of the worker, the supervisor, and any co-workers who will be assisting the worker;
- Time frames for achieving these goals so that there is a yardstick to measure the worker's progress. It is important that the plan has a beginning and an end, as modified/graduated work is a means to achieve a return to pre-injury work and is not an end in itself;
- A clear definition of what is considered progress (e.g. the worker can work five hours a day by week three, or the worker can assume tasks by week five);
- Schedule of continuing health care (e.g. re-assessment or therapy frequency). This will be done outside of working hours wherever possible;
- Medication being taken by the employee that is related to the injury so that the company can make fully informed decisions regarding the RTW.

All associates on modified work suffer from diminished capacity and are either working reduced hours, performing a reduced range of duties, or both. One of the main objectives of the modified work is to facilitate rehabilitation. In a majority of cases, overtime work conflicts with this objective. For this reason, overtime will not be permitted.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION

If there is a dispute between the company and the employee regarding the Return to Work Plan, the following steps will be taken:

- All interested parties (including WSIB, Health Care Professional, HR, Manager/Supervisor, and CAW where applicable) will review the RTWP, where an error has been made, reasonable steps will be taken by either party to correct the error;
- If the dispute is regarding functional ability/suitability of work match:
 - Obtain an updated Functional Abilities and Timely Return to Work Form, and review the availability of suitable work;
 - If necessary, where the recovery is not progressing as anticipated, refer the employee to an independent Health Care Professional to conduct a more comprehensive functional abilities evaluation;
- Where the dispute cannot be resolved, the matter will be referred to the WSIB for assistance from a RTW Mediator for resolution.