

Steps to Creating a Return-to-Work Program

We can help!

BEFORE the Injury Occurs

STEP 1: Create your Early Return-to-Work Policy and Procedures.

Having a written policy and procedures developed in advance is the first step to a successful return-to-work program. Your finance, legal and human resources team should be involved with its development. The policy should be part of your new employee orientation and should also be presented to all active employees. Visit IWIF.com under the "Publications" section to view and download IWIF's Guide to Creating a Return-to-Work Program, which includes a sample policy.

STEP 2: Maintain and update job descriptions and a job analysis for each type of employment position.

Complete and keep up-to-date and on file a detailed job description, including documenting all physical requirements of the job. Determine if any position requires a pre-employment physical. If possible, create a short video showing the typical physical duties of each job. These job videos can help the treating physician to better understand the physical requirements for each job function.

STEP 3: Establish a relationship with an IWIF network medical provider for the treatment of injured employees.

IWIF has established a Preferred Provider Network with quality medical providers available throughout Maryland. You can locate providers in your area by visiting our website and using the "Locate a Medical Provider" search feature. Meet with your local network medical provider and inform the physician of your desire for both timely medical care but also your desire for a timely return-to-work release. Having up-to-date job descriptions and modified task analysis forms completed for your injured worker are valuable tools to provide the medical provider.

STEP 4: Create and maintain your "Idea Bank of Transitional Duty Alternate Jobs."

Be creative with identifying alternate job tasks. Schedule a meeting of supervisors and employees to suggest alternate duty jobs. Encourage everyone to come up with as many suggestions as possible. Be creative and look at what meaningful work/job tasks need to be done in your workplace. List the physical activities for each task, as this will assist the physician in understanding the transitional duties.

STEP 5: Create a positive and consistent workplace culture for both safety and return-to-work.

Your first priority is a safe workplace at all times. But in the event of a workplace injury, you also want to promote a positive culture for an early return to work. Publicize to all employees that you have a return-to-work program. Ensure the entire process, transitional job duties, and supervision are positive, constructive and never demeaning. When your employees see and hear first hand that the return-to-work program is applied fairly and uniformly to all injured employees in a positive manner, you'll have less resistance and more acceptance to return to work.

STEP 6: Communication is important.

An essential requirement for a successful early return-to-work program is prompt and frequent communication between the employer, the injured worker, medical provider and your IWIF claims team.

Steps to Creating a Return-to-Work Program

We can help!

Return-to-work forms are available at IWIF.com - Forms and Publications

- Modified Job/Task Analysis
- Physical Capacity Form
- Transitional Work Assignment/Offer Letter
- Back to Work Follow-Up Form

AFTER the Injury and Initial Treatment

STEP 1: Injured worker receives medical treatment.

When possible, IWIF recommends utilizing a preferred network medical provider. Network medical providers understand the workers' comp process and can provide both timely medical care for the injured worker as well as understand the positive benefits of recovery in conjunction with a return-to-work program. Visit IWIF.com and click the "Locate a Medical Provider" search feature for medical providers in your area.

STEP 2: Conduct your internal return-to-work action meeting.

Include the employee's supervisor and your human resources/workers' comp team. This is the come together meeting to plan the injured workers' return to work, agree on the transitional job duties and plan of action for a safe, successful and timely return to work. Your IWIF team is available by conference call to help answer any questions you may have.

STEP 3: The IWIF team is ready to help!

IWIF's claims adjusters and nurse case managers will actively monitor the claim and can help the employer identify those types of injuries that are good candidates for return-to-work. Tell your claims adjuster that you have modified duty available or ask them for assistance in identifying modified duty. **New Service!** Our claims adjusters can refer one of our loss control consultants to schedule a visit to your workplace to offer guidance for creating modified duty.

STEP 4: The treating medical doctor should be given these forms:

- Modified Job/Task Analysis Form** (Completed by the employer)
- Physical Capacity Form** (Completed by the doctor)

IMPORTANT STEP: The treating doctor's medical release for modified duty is a crucial step for the success of any return-to-work program. These completed forms should be forwarded to your claims adjuster.

STEP 5: IWIF reviews the completed forms and can assist with the transitional assignment offer letter.

The claims adjuster will review the doctor's medical release and completed physical capacity form and will go over the results and restrictions with you. We will contact you and can assist you in completing and sending to the injured worker the **"Transitional Work Assignment Offer Letter."**

This offer letter should include the description of the transitional duty assignment, duration, pay rate, work schedule and supervisor during the transitional-duty assignment.

IMPORTANT STEP: The injured employee must understand and agree to the offer of a transitional work assignment by signing and returning the offer letter.

STEP 6: Welcome Back! After the injured worker has accepted the transitional work offer, ensure that the supervisor is actively engaged in helping the worker reconnect with the workplace and his or her new job duties. Make sure the new work area is set up, and properly supplied in advance and made comfortable for the returning worker. Both the supervisor and your human resource representative should actively monitor the daily progress of the employee in the transitional work assignment. The employer/supervisor should then complete the **"Back to Work Follow-Up Form"** and forward it to your IWIF claims adjuster.

Important Tip: Ensure that monitoring of the transitional work and the overall process remains positive. The goal is for the worker to perform the job safely and comfortably within the restrictions of the transitional duty. You may need to make slight modifications to the transitional work assignment.

STEP 7: Follow-up medical treatment and eventual recovery and return to regular job duties.

The injured worker may have ongoing follow-up medical treatment and evaluation while on transitional work duty. The treating physician will provide a final/full release to regular job duties after recovery.