

Policy & Procedure Manual

EARLY AND SAFE RETURN TO WORK - HR-X-3

POLICY:

OPTIONS NORTHWEST is committed to providing a healthy and safe workplace for our workers. Prevention of work-related injuries and illnesses is our primary goal.

Our Return to Work program provides opportunities for a worker who has suffered a work-related injury or illness to return to work on a gradual or immediate basis, back to full duty, using a collaborative team planning approach. If the worker is not physically capable of returning to full duty, the program provides opportunities to perform the regular job with modifications or, when available to perform alternate temporary work that meets the worker's physical capabilities.

PURPOSE:

1. To provide a return to work program that is safe, available, within the worker's functional abilities and that, where possible, restores the worker's pre-injury earnings.
2. To provide a fair and consistent process for injured employees returning to work.
3. To maintain compliance with the W.S.I. Act.

PROCEDURE:

OPTIONS Early and Safe Return to Work Program may include the following:

- A reduction/change in hours;
- A change in workplace location
- A reduction in volume of work performed
- An assignment to a special work project
- Tasks not normally performed by the employee but which are consistent with the worker's restriction.

Expected duration of program is 6 – 8 weeks.

1. i) **Coordinator, Health and Safety/Supervisor Responsibilities:**

As soon as possible following a workplace injury or disease, the employer is responsible for identifying and arranging appropriate employment for the worker. Under the Act, the employer is required to:

- contact the worker as soon as possible after the injury occurs and maintain communication throughout the period of the workers recovery and return to work;
- attempt to provide suitable employment that is suitable available and consistent with the worker's functional abilities and that, when possible, restores the worker's pre-injury earnings;
- provide the Board with any information requested concerning the worker's return to work;
- do such other things as may be prescribed.

ii) **Worker Responsibilities:**

Depending on the nature of the injury, a worker may be able to return to work on the day of the injury or soon after. The health care professional's restrictions, if any, are considered and the worker is returned to safe and available employment that is within the worker's functional abilities. Under the Act, the worker is required to:

- cooperate fully with the Employer in all RTW plans;
- contact the employer as soon as possible after the injury occurs and maintain communication throughout the period of recovery and return to work;
- when filing a claim, give written consent to the employer for the release of functional abilities information by the treating health care professional;
- provide the employer with a copy of the completed WSIB Form 6 – Worker's Report of Injury/Disease as obligated to do so by WSIB;
- assist the employer, as may be required or requested, to identify suitable employment that is available and consistent with the worker's functional abilities and that, where possible, restores pre-injury earnings;
- provide the WSIB with any information requested concerning the return to work;
- do such other things as may be prescribed.

iii) **Workplace Safety and Insurance Board Responsibilities**

In most cases the Board is not involved in the ESRTW process except to:

- communicate to the workplace parties their obligations to co-operate in the process
- monitor co-operation of both parties in the process
- determine compliance with obligations, and co-operation
- provide dispute resolution if requested.

iv) **Duration of Obligation:**

The obligation lasts until the earliest of:

- the second anniversary of the date of injury;
- one year after the worker is medically able to perform the essential duties of the worker's pre-injury employment,
- the date on which the worker reaches 65 years of age.

2. A plan for the early and safe return to work will commence on the day of or on the first day following the injury. At this time, the Coordinator, Health and Safety, the worker, the worker's Supervisor, and as required, a union representative, will meet to review the restrictions which have been identified by the health care professional on page 2 of Form 8 and/or the Functional Abilities Form. The worker's limitations, the job description and job modifications will be discussed and an individualized program will be developed and signed off on by the worker. The Return to Work Plan will be given to the worker and Supervisor and a copy placed in the claim file (see Appendix A). A copy of the plan may also be sent to WSIB. If there is no loss in earnings and no healthcare given, an injured worker's duties can be modified for up to seven calendar days before the injury has to be reported. After seven days the injury must be reported if modified duties continue because at that time it is assumed by WSIB that the injury would require medical attention.
3. If the worker's limitations can be incorporated into job duties, she/he will commence the program immediately.
4. If restrictions/limitations are such that they cannot be incorporated in a return to work program immediately, the worker will be assessed weekly (more frequently if necessary) by the Coordinator, Health and Safety and the treating health care professional. When the worker's condition improves and restrictions are such as

can be accommodated in a return to work program (in the opinion of the Coordinator, Health and Safety), the Early and Safe Return to Work Committee will meet to discuss and develop a program to fit the worker.

5. If a worker is unable to meet to discuss a return to work program because of hospitalization or bed rest at home recuperating before treatment begins the worker shall maintain regular contact with the Coordinator, Health and Safety, and the Supervisor as determined necessary.
6. Once the worker has begun the return to work program, the Early and Safe Return to Work Committee will meet with the worker weekly or as necessary to discuss worker recovery and appropriateness of duties until she/he is fit for regular duties. The worker's duties will be assessed and adjusted to meet changing limitations and the Plan updated as necessary. The worker will be responsible for completing a RTW daily log of activities provided to the worker by the Co-ordinator Health and Safety. At the RTW meeting the RTW Committee will review this log. The worker will be responsible for immediately notifying their Supervisor and the Co-ordinator Health and Safety if problems arise in the program.
7. Workers will be closely monitored by the treating health care professional throughout the recovery period. The return to regular duties must be confirmed in writing by the health care professional stating that the worker has recovered to the point of resuming regular duties.
8. The exit criteria from the RTW process is as follows:
 - return to regular job at full capacity
 - return to full functional capacity supported by functional ability information
 - unable to identify suitable, available work
 - permanent placement in alternative work
9. The Coordinator, Health and Safety may send/fax a copy of the RTW Plan to the WSIB (Claims Manager) and to the treating health care professional, as determined necessary.

The Coordinator, Health and Safety will send/fax a notice of a completed or discontinued Return to Work Plan to WSIB.
10. If a dispute arises regarding the Early and Safe Return to Work Program, WSIB will be notified and mediation will be requested.

11. If the return to work activities offered in the workplace do not result in a worker's return to appropriate employment, the WSIB may provide the worker with a Work Reintegration Program.
12. If assessments determine that the employee will not be returning to pre-job placement, the Human Resources Coordinator and Director and the Payroll and IT specialist will be notified.
13. **Education Program:**

Workers and management will be educated in the use of the policy through the Health and Safety Awareness Training Program and/or other such sessions.

RECOMMENDED BY: Manager, Human Resources and
Coordinator, Health and Safety

APPENDICES: 1

OPERATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY: Administration, Finance, Human Resources,
Supportive Living Services (all)

ORIGINAL POLICY DATE: September 1998

AUTHORIZED BY: Executive Director

SIGNATURE:



Modifications to work site required: Yes No
Date of next RTW meeting:

If you have any concerns with the duties or your progress please contact your Director, Supervisor or Health and Safety Coordinator immediately, as well as your WSIB Case Manager.

I understand this plan and agree to cooperate fully in carrying it out. I agree to complete a daily log for each modified shift I work, and will share my entries to the log with my Supervisor and the Return to Work Team.

Name: _____
(please print)

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Cc: Employee, Supervisor