

What is Return to Work (RTW)?

RTW:

- means getting employees back to their jobs.
- considers individual circumstances, particularly in regard to the injury sustained.
- embraces a culture that fosters employees' needs.
- considers what jobs the individual can accomplish and how to ensure short- and long-term productivity.
- can include a formal plan or an informal plan, depending on the nature and environment of the business.

Why Have RTW?

Ideally, RTW returns employees to their original position/job. RTW can also mean involving employees in alternative jobs that serve as a "stepping stone" toward returning to their full position once they have fully recovered.

RTW may also transition the employee to a different position that provides mutual benefit. The employee has a job they can do despite an illness or injury and, the employer has a contributing team member.

RTW Program Benefits



Control Workers' Compensation Costs

Job-related injuries can lead to huge expenses for the employer. In addition to workers' compensation, there are the indirect costs of lost production, investigations, inspections, overtime and training expenses.



Retain Employee

The chance of an employee returning to work after an injury decreases the longer the employee is gone. Offering modified/transitional job duties to the injured employee helps them remain a valuable part of the organization and reduces the need to hire and train their replacements.



Promote Full Recovery

RTW programs reduce the likelihood of noncompliance with the rehabilitation plan. Also, employees in RTW programs are more likely to stay on course toward a full recovery.

Where and How Should the Employer Begin?



Develop a Plan

Develop, establish and communicate a commitment to return injured employees to their primary roles as soon as possible. Be prepared to provide options to remain at work during the recovery process.



Identify a Coordinator

Identify a RTW coordinator and make sure employees know who that person is. Develop that role to:

- Work with local physicians to establish an incident management report and return-to-work process.
- Assure the injured employee will get the proper care.
- Notify the Workers' Compensation insurance carrier immediately.
- Communicate the employee's current position and available transitional duties to the attending physician, the workers' compensation carrier and the employee.



Create a Job Bank

Create job descriptions and physical requirements for those jobs. Don't forget light-duty work.