
Return to Work Program After Injury

1.0 Policy Purpose & Scope

The purpose of this Return to Work (RTW) Program is to establish a proactive, consistent, and legally compliant framework for managing the early and safe return of employees to suitable work following a work-related injury or illness. This policy aims to reduce the human and financial costs of workplace injuries by promoting recovery, maintaining worker engagement, and minimizing time away from work. This policy applies to all employees, including full-time, part-time, temporary, and contract workers, as well as all supervisors, managers, and human resources personnel involved in the injury management process. It covers all work-related injuries and illnesses, regardless of severity, from the point of first aid to full recovery or maximum medical improvement.

2.0 Regulatory Context & Compliance

This program is designed to align with and exceed the requirements of the Workers Compensation Act (WCA) of British Columbia, specifically Part 3 – Occupational Health and Safety, and the associated WorkSafeBC Occupational Health and Safety Regulation (OHSR).

Key regulatory drivers include: (a) Section 115 of the WCA, which mandates the duty to cooperate in return to work;

(b) WorkSafeBC's Rehabilitation Services and Claims Management policies, which require employers to offer suitable modified work to injured workers;

(c) The requirement under OHSR Part 3 to maintain a written occupational health and safety program that includes injury management procedures; and

(d) Privacy obligations under the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA) for handling medical information. Non-compliance may result in WorkSafeBC penalty assessments, increased claim costs, and legal liability.

3.0 Roles & Responsibilities

Employer/Management:

(a) Develop, implement, and maintain the RTW Program;

(b) Designate a Return to Work Coordinator (RTWC) with authority to manage the program;

(c) Ensure adequate resources, including modified work options, are available;

(d) Communicate the program to all workers and supervisors;

(e) Maintain confidentiality of medical information;

(f) Cooperate with WorkSafeBC and the worker's healthcare provider.

Supervisors: (a) Immediately report all injuries to the RTWC and complete incident documentation;

(b) Participate in the development of modified work plans;

(c) Provide a supportive environment for the returning worker;

(d) Monitor the worker's progress and report any concerns to the RTWC;

(e) Ensure modified duties do not exceed medical restrictions.

Workers: (a) Report all injuries promptly to their supervisor;

(b) Cooperate with the RTWC and healthcare providers in developing a return to work plan;

(c) Provide necessary medical information (functional abilities, restrictions) to facilitate modified work;

(d) Participate in the RTW process in good faith;

(e) Adhere to all modified work restrictions and safety protocols.

4.0 Program Execution & Procedures

The RTW Program follows a structured process:

(1) Immediate

Response: Upon injury, the supervisor ensures first aid, completes an incident report, and notifies the RTWC within 24 hours.

(2) Medical

Assessment: The worker provides a functional abilities form from their treating physician, detailing restrictions and capabilities.

(3) RTW Plan

Development: The RTWC, in consultation with the worker, supervisor, and healthcare provider, develops a written RTW plan outlining modified duties, hours, and duration.

(4) Modified

Work Offer: The employer offers suitable modified work that accommodates the worker's restrictions, prioritizing the worker's pre-injury job with modifications, then alternative duties.

(5) Implementation & Monitoring: The worker returns to modified duties under the supervisor's guidance. The RTWC conducts weekly check-ins to assess progress and adjust the plan as needed.

(6) Graduated

Return: The plan may include a gradual increase in hours or duties, leading to full return to pre-injury work.

(7) Escalation: If the worker cannot return to any suitable work, the RTWC coordinates with WorkSafeBC and the healthcare provider for further rehabilitation options. All communications and plans are documented in the company's safety management system.

5.0 Review & Recordkeeping

Records related to the RTW Program, including incident reports, functional abilities forms, RTW plans, and communication logs, must be retained for a minimum of five years from the date of the injury, or longer if required by WorkSafeBC or pending litigation. The RTWC is responsible for maintaining these records in a secure, confidential file separate from personnel files. The program itself will be reviewed annually by the Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) or the employer's safety team, with input from the RTWC, to assess effectiveness, identify trends, and implement improvements. Any changes to WorkSafeBC regulations or company operations will trigger an immediate review. A written report of the review will be presented to senior management.

Regulatory Disclaimer: This policy is a generic organizational template. The end-user assumes all liability for reviewing and adapting these protocols to meet specific provincial regulations (e.g., WorkSafeBC, OHSA) and corporate requirements prior to formal implementation.