

**WORKING  
TO WELL**

# **EMPLOYER'S GUIDE**

## **FOR MANAGING WORKPLACE INJURIES**



# STEPS TO REDUCE THE IMPACT OF INJURY AT YOUR WORKPLACE

- 1** Your Return-to-Work program is part of an overall safety program, with defined policies and procedures.
- 2** Your organization promotes a climate of trust and respect, with supportive and engaged managers.
- 3** You use Direct Access to health-care providers.
- 4** You offer workers transitional duties immediately.
- 5** You have a Functional Job Analysis for every position.
- 6** You submit claims quickly and accurately, and monitor them online for progress.
- 7** You communicate in a timely and regular manner with the WCB and your worker's health-care provider.
- 8** You help develop personalized return-to-work plans for employees injured on the job.
- 9** You understand the appeals process.
- 10** Your organization offers accommodation and re-employment, if applicable.

**W**hile injury prevention is the best way to keep workers safe and reduce overall costs, putting an effective return-to-work program in place is the best way to manage the impact of an injury. Reducing injuries and supporting employees when an injury occurs will also reduce your workers' compensation premiums.

As an employer or manager, your role in supporting an injured employee through their treatment plan is critical to their success, and ultimately, to yours.

We've compiled a checklist of what successful organizations do best when it comes to helping employees recover from workplace injury. We hope it helps you support better return-to-work outcomes for your organization.

The key to successful execution of each step is to make sure you are not only actively demonstrating it, but also documenting the actions that support it. Building these checks and balances into each step will help promote more positive results.

# WORKING TO WELL: BEST PRACTICES CHECKLIST FOR SUCCESSFUL RETURN-TO-WORK RESULTS

## YOUR ORGANIZATION HAS A DEFINED RETURN-TO-WORK PROGRAM

- Does your workplace have a Return-to-Work program?
  - The goal of a RTW program is a safe and timely return to the workplace.
  - The key to a successful return-to-work program is strong leadership and guidance, coupled with a positive collaboration between your injured employee and all the return-to-work partners.
  - The first step to establishing your program is to develop a return-to-work policy. The policy should be easily understood, outlining expectations and stated commitments of both management and employees, and signed by a senior leader.
  
- How do you let your employees know about it?
  - Involve them in the development
  - Include in orientation for new hires
  - Post policy on your intranet or bulletin board
  - Add topic to regularly scheduled safety talks
  - Assign a return-to-work point person
  - Discuss with a worker when injured

## YOU HAVE SUPPORTIVE AND ENGAGED MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS

- Do managers and supervisors build a climate of trust, respect and compassion?
  - Provide training to supervisors and managers
  - Create a supportive work environment for employees
- Are they supportive and engaged?
  - Educated on process and roles
  - Promptly initiate the return-to-work process when an injury occurs
  - Call your employee to follow up after an injury and stay connected throughout their treatment process
  - Investigate the cause of the injury and takes steps to ensure others aren't at risk

### TIP FOR SUCCESS

- ✓ At the onset of an injury, it's important to establish early and consistent communication with your worker to demonstrate your concern and support. This is preferably done by a supervisor or manager. Staying in touch throughout an employee's recovery provides reassurance they are a valued member of a team and that someone cares about their progress.
- ✓ To pre-empt an injury that may require time lost from work, encourage your employees to discuss any recurring pain or symptoms with you, in order to adjust their work stations or procedures appropriately. Remember, the best return-to-work program is the one you never have to use.

## YOU USE DIRECT ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

- Encourage your employee to go directly to physiotherapy if you suspect a sprain or strain injury. Direct access to a physiotherapy or chiropractic assessment means the healing process can begin right away.
- Identify your nearest WCB-approved health-care provider and arrange for transportation in the event of an injury to an employee.

### TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- ✓ Invite your health-care provider to a site visit so they are familiar with your operations. This will help them match job duties to what a worker can do when discussing the return-to-work plan with you.
- ✓ Building a relationship with your local health-care provider means your employees will benefit sooner from appropriate treatment and exploration of transitional duties available in the workplace that will help in their recovery.
- ✓ Take steps to ensure an injury does not occur to others or to the returning worker
  - Investigating the cause(s) of a workplace injury, identifying the hazards that led to it, and taking corrective action will prevent recurrence.

## **YOU IMMEDIATELY OFFER TRANSITIONAL DUTIES TO EMPLOYEES WITH WORKPLACE INJURIES**

- Transitional duties are temporary changes to a worker's job tasks that align with their functional abilities. In other words, duties that match what a worker is able to do.
- The health-care provider and worker should discuss transitional duties at the beginning of a treatment plan.
- For workers unable to immediately return to their original job, transitional duties are critical to helping them recover. These duties contribute to valuable work, keep employees connected, and reduce the claims costs associated with lost time from work.
- Transitional duties must be meaningful, productive and within the injured worker's skills and abilities. When a worker returns to transitional duties, it's your responsibility to work with them, in consultation with their health-care provider and WCB case worker, to progressively increase duties as their ability improves.
- Transitional duties should be as closely related to the original job as possible given the worker's restrictions, and the transitional assignment should be short-term.
- A date to return to regular duties should be clearly determined at the outset based on when the worker is physically able to return to their original job. The employee's attending health care provider and WCB case worker will determine this date, based on the individual's injury and expected recovery, and information from you, the employer, on what supports are available in the workplace during recovery.

## TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- ✓ Tell your worker what their first day back will look like, so they are comfortable about returning, especially if they are returning on reduced hours or transitional duties. Talk to the worker's supervisor and co-workers so they understand the plan and can be supportive.
- ✓ Share information with your worker, their health care provider and the WCB case worker early and in a timely fashion.
- ✓ Case Conference. A case conference is a checkpoint for all the members of a return to work team. It provides an opportunity for you, your employee, their health-care provider, and their WCB case worker to discuss any concerns with the treatment plan to date, make necessary adjustments, and agree on a go-forward plan. A case conference is not always required, but it is one way of monitoring a claim and supporting the worker to keep their recovery on track. Open, ongoing communication and teamwork are essential to return-to-work success.

## FUNCTIONAL JOB DESCRIPTIONS ARE PROVIDED FOR ALL POSITIONS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

- Create functional job descriptions for all positions in your organization – include a physical demands analysis and provide copies to your health care provider. This will make it easier for them to match the worker's abilities to job duties when considering their treatment plan.
- Your WCB case worker or local health care provider can help you source an appropriate template or service to assist you in the development of your own functional job descriptions.

## **YOUR CLAIMS SUBMISSIONS ARE ACCURATE AND TIMELY**

- Submitting claims fast and online through My-Account means you and your employee can access the right service at the right time, so recovery can begin sooner. Monitor your company's claim costs and progress in real-time at [my-account.ns.ca](http://my-account.ns.ca).
- Watch for enhancements to MyAccount coming soon, and be sure to use them.

## **WHEN A WORKPLACE INJURY OCCURS, YOU CONTACT WCB NOVA SCOTIA IMMEDIATELY TO REPORT IT, AND COMMUNICATE REGULARLY AFTERWARDS REGARDING TRANSITIONAL DUTIES, PAYROLL, AND RETURN-TO-WORK PLANS**

- Get to know your WCB case management team. We want what's best for both you and your worker and can support you in the return-to-work process.
- If your employee misses time due to a workplace injury, providing payroll information through the WCB Injury Report will mean we can begin a worker's claim and move forward faster to support their return to your workplace.
- Call your employee's physiotherapist to get a clear picture of what he or she can do. This will help determine what duties you have available in your workplace and give the health-care provider valuable information as they create the treatment plan in cooperation with the WCB case worker.

## **EVERY EMPLOYEE WITH A WORKPLACE INJURY HAS A PERSONALIZED RETURN-TO-WORK PLAN**

- Getting your employee back to the work they did before their injury is your number one goal. Helping create a custom plan for your employee is the most important aspect of their safe and timely return to work.
  - The plan will be developed in close consultation with every member of the worker's return to work team: physiotherapist/chiropractor/occupational therapist/physician, the WCB case worker, your employee, and you, the employer. It's important to keep your employee actively engaged in these discussions so they understand and take ownership of next steps in the plan.

## YOU UNDERSTAND THE CLAIMS APPEALS PROCESS

- From time to time, there may be aspects of a claim that you have questions about. At any point, if you have questions or concerns about a claims decision or assessment matter, talk to us. If you still disagree with a decision after discussing it with your case worker, you may file an appeal.
  - It's important to note that the appeals process is not intended as a reconsideration of the entire claim. It exists to review specific errors or oversights in the claim decision. It is important that appeals be as specific as possible.
  - If at any time you receive new information regarding your claim decision or assessment matter, you may present this information to us.
  - WCB Nova Scotia exists to support those whose lives are touched by workplace injury, both employers' and workers'. We are here to help, so do not hesitate to contact us. We will do our best to provide the information you need.

## YOU UNDERSTAND YOUR DUTIES AS AN EMPLOYER TO OFFER ACCOMMODATION AND RE-EMPLOYMENT, AND THE PROGRAMS AVAILABLE FOR ASSISTANCE

- If your workplace employs 20 or more people, and an employee has a permanent injury or impairment, you must alter the work or the workplace to their needs, as long as it doesn't cause you undue hardship. This is known as "Accommodation" and is a provision under the Workers' Compensation Act of Nova Scotia. Not all workers with a permanent impairment require accommodation. Be sure to ask your case worker for clarity.
- If your workplace employs 20 or more people, you must offer re-employment to an employee if they have been unable to work as a result of the injury and if they had been employed for 12 continuous months previous to the injury.
- Vocational rehabilitation services are available for workers who may not be able to return to their previous occupation after an injury. Talk to your WCB case worker to learn about the eligibility requirements for the programs that are available.
- There are a variety of provisions and scenarios that impact an employer's ability to re-employ and accommodate, so be sure to ask your WCB case worker what approach is right for you.



We are here to support you and your employee as you help them recover. Let's work together to protect Nova Scotians from the physical, emotional and financial impact of workplace injury.

Contact us:

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