CCSA Return-to-Work and Disability Management Program
# Table of Contents

CCSA Return-to-Work & Disability Management Program ...........................................................................3

Benefits and Responsibilities ..........................................................................................................................5
  For Employers ...........................................................................................................................................5
  For Workers .................................................................................................................................6

1. Management Support ...........................................................................................................................8
   Modified Work Policy Statement ....................................................................................................9

2. Assign a Return-to-Work Coordinator .............................................................................................10

3. Develop Policies, Procedures and Forms .........................................................................................11
   Policy (if a more detailed policy is required) ....................................................................................11
   Procedures .........................................................................................................................................12
     Memo to Worker ..........................................................................................................................15
     Offer of Modified Work ...............................................................................................................16
     Revisions to Offer of Modified Duty ............................................................................................18

Contact with Healthcare Providers ........................................................................................................19
  Sample Fitness for Work form ............................................................................................................21
  Job Hazard Analysis ..........................................................................................................................23
  Modified Duty Job Bank .......................................................................................................................26
    Adjusting Modified Duty Programs ..............................................................................................35

4. Educate All Staff ................................................................................................................................36

5. Promote Your Program (Ongoing) ....................................................................................................37

6. Implement and Evaluate .....................................................................................................................38

Injury Investigation and Appeals ..............................................................................................................39

Conclusion: ..............................................................................................................................................45

Works Cited: ..........................................................................................................................................46

Additional Resources: .............................................................................................................................47
Workplace injuries, illnesses and accidents can be costly to an organization and to the workers within that organization. Lost-time claims increase costs and premiums, and can have a negative effect on productivity. While an organization’s first priority should be to prevent injuries, implementing a return-to-work (RTW) program when injuries do occur is one of the most effective ways to manage injuries and control associated costs. A RTW program is a proactive tool for employers to better support ill or injured workers in returning to productive, meaningful duties in a timely manner. A RTW program is based on the idea that many workers can perform meaningful and safe work as part of their recovery process. In doing so, the impact of injuries and illnesses on workers, employers and organizations can be minimized. In the article “Creating an Effective Workplace Disability Management Program” provided by the Conference Board of Canada, it was outlined that since workers interact with colleagues in most organizations, the productivity of teams of four to eight workers can drop by 22 percent when one of the workers is absent.

Implementing a return-to-work (RTW) program when injuries do occur is one of the most effective ways to manage injuries and control associated costs.

It was often thought that when a worker becomes injured or ill they should stay away from the workplace until they have fully recovered from their injury or illness and are able to perform all of their regular duties. However, the National Institute of Disability Management and Research, Disability Management in the Workplace has identified that the longer the leave of absence, the lower the probability that the worker will return to any form of employment. There is only 50 percent chance that after a worker has been absent from the workplace for more than six months that they will return. During absenteeism, a worker’s bond to his or her workplace can be broken resulting in having an impact on the individual, the employer and the organization.

The main focus of a return-to-work program is to return the worker to the position he or she held prior to the injury or illness. If full return to work is not possible right away, the RTW program can include modified work alternatives for workers to engage in as soon as possible. Modified work is a temporary change in regular work duties to accommodate an injury. Changes can be made to:

- work duration
- tasks and processes
- environment or work location
- equipment

Most physicians say only 5% of workers actually require time off work after an injury. Therefore, 60-80% of lost work days involve medically unnecessary time off from work.

WCB Alberta outlines that modified work needs to be:

- **achievable** - given your injury, are you able to physically perform the work
- **safe** - modified work should not endanger your recovery or safety or the safety of others
- **constructive** - modified work should contribute to your skill development and your return to full duties
- **productive** - your duties should be meaningful to the organization

Workers who participate in modified work return to regular duties faster than those who remain away from the workplace. On average, modified work programs halve the amount of time workers spend away from work following an injury or illness, and halve the number of workers that do not return at all. Modified work allows for workers to remain at work while recovering, which allows them to maintain independence, workplace relationships, skill levels and still contribute meaningfully to the workplace.

A successful return-to-work program is dependent on cooperation and communication between employers, workers, health care providers, unions (if applicable) and WCB Alberta. An effective return-to-work program should be considered an essential part of every organization, whether large or small.

When it comes to the development of a return-to-work program, WCB Alberta recommends a six-stage process as shown below:

1. Obtain Management Support
2. Assign a RTW Coordinator
3. Develop policies, procedures, and forms
4. Educate Staff
5. Promote Your Program
6. Implement and Evaluate

Each stage of this process will be further explained and, where possible, forms and samples have been included for organizations to customize to their needs. It is important to note that each stage in the process is designed to both ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the program and to create a supportive atmosphere for those in the workplace that require accommodation.
Benefits and Responsibilities

For Employers

The costs to employers of not returning workers to productive work fall into two categories:

*Direct Costs:* are those costs that are immediately evident. This includes WCB and insurance premiums and covering the injured worker’s salary during the absence.

*Indirect costs:* are those costs that are not immediately evident. This includes training costs for replacing an absent worker, overtime, decreased productivity and administrative costs.

With a return-to-work program, many costs can be avoided depending on the worker’s injury or illness. Each program will vary depending on the needs of the injured/ill worker. Accommodating an injured/ill worker’s needs can benefit an employer in many ways, including:

- Retain experienced and trained workers
- Reduce the recovery time of injured or ill workers
- Reduce worker time lost from work
- Increase workplace morale
- Reduce additional hiring and training costs
- Maintain productivity
- Reduce disability costs and WCB premiums
- Promote injury recovery and a safe, early return to work
- Meet legal requirements related to Human Rights and WCB legislation

The benefits to an employer can be substantial, but to be successful an employer must understand the responsibilities they have when implementing a RTW program. Employers have a legislative requirement referred to as the “Employer’s Duty to Accommodate” outlined in the Alberta Human Rights Commission. The Alberta Human Rights Commission publication, *“Duty to Accommodate”* identifies that in accordance with Alberta Human Rights Act,

*“the duty to accommodate in employment refers to an employer’s obligation to take appropriate steps to eliminate discrimination against employees and potential employees. Discrimination may result from a rule, practice or barrier that has a negative effect on a person with a need for accommodation based on the grounds protected under the AHR Act.”*

Accommodation can include, but is not limited to, modifying rules, standards, policies and/or physical environments to ensure that the worker is not negatively impacted due to their injury or illness.
Other recommended employer responsibilities in the return-to-work program include:

- Treat all parties with respect and dignity (considering Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and Regulation)
- Accommodate injured/ill workers in safe, achievable, constructive and productive modified work positions/tasks
- Consult with workers, their union representatives (if applicable), healthcare providers and WCB Alberta
- Ensure that supervisors, health and safety personnel and employees receive appropriate modified work and return-to-work program training
- Identify suitable modified work tasks/positions and the physical demands for each task/position
- Provide support to supervisors to address modified work issues
- Ensure workers on modified work programs are being monitored (this can include assistance from supervisors)
- Monitor compliance to medical work restrictions
- Monitor progression of the injured/ill worker and ensure that the modified duties remain appropriate
- Promote injury and illness prevention at the workplace

For more information on what an employer can request from an employee when accommodation needs to be made at work, see Alberta Human Rights Commission publication, “Obtaining and responding to medical information in the workplace: A summary for employees”.

**For Workers**

A return-to-work program will aid in a positive experience and recovery for an injured or ill worker. Prolonged absence from the workplace can be detrimental to an individual's mental, physical and social well-being. It is important that employers, workers, health care providers, unions (if applicable) and WCB Alberta are involved and playing each of their required roles. We know that every situation will be different, which highlights the importance of worker involvement to ensure that specific injury or illness needs are met when developing an individualized program. Workers need to understand the benefits of engaging in a RTW program and potentially, modified duties. Once there is meaning and value to engaging in a RTW program, the roles and responsibilities will become more defined and important to achieving a successful recovery.

Benefits for a worker engaging in a return-to-work program may include:

- Faster recovery enabling return to normal activities at work and at home
- Decreased time away from work
- Continued involvement in the workplace - maintaining work skills and work-related relationships
• Reduced or eliminated lost earnings and financial uncertainty
• Reduced risk of re-injury on return to work
• Increased independence
• Maintained sense of confidence and value
• Minimized impact on family
• Continued contributions to the organization’s success

In order for a worker to contribute the required information to develop and implement a successful return-to-work program, they need to be aware of what their role is and what their responsibilities are. It is an employer’s responsibility to ensure that the workers’ roles and responsibilities are communicated to them, and fully understood. Worker comprehension allows for a successful return-to-work process.

Recommended worker responsibilities in the return-to-work program include:

• Clearly communicate to the employer, healthcare providers and WCB Alberta exactly what happened when they were hurt
• Discuss with healthcare providers work capacities and restrictions (if possible, ask for any other additional resources to help with a successful RTW process)
• Inform employer about healthcare providers’ recommended work capacities and restrictions
• Follow treatment plans and identified work restrictions set out by the healthcare providers and WCB Alberta
• Only perform duties identified in their specific return-to-work program
• Openly discuss ideas and solutions with employer
• Maintain communication and appointments with healthcare providers and WCB Alberta
• Discuss progression with healthcare providers and employer
• Inform employer and WCB Alberta of any changes in medical recovery
• Retain a personal record of any related documentation
1. Management Support

Management must be on board

A successful return-to-work program requires commitment from the organization’s senior management. In fact, the Institute for Work & Health (IWH) has found senior management investment of resources and time to promote safety and return-to-work as strong indicators of favourable return-to-work outcomes. (2007)

This commitment is likely to take both time and financial resources to help injured employees return to work quickly and safely. These allocated resources should be viewed as investments in employee’s health and wellness and workplace morale while helping to control WCB costs.

At this stage, the organization should establish strategic goals or objectives for the program which indicate what it hopes to achieve by implementing a return-to-work program. Later, evaluations of the program should be performed to see if the organization’s goals were met and to identify opportunities for continuous improvement of the program.

To help provide guidance to the organization, it is recommended that management endorse a policy statement related to return-to-work. A policy statement can help by ensuring consistency in messaging and provide direction for decision makers and return-to-work coordinators. It is recommended that a policy statement for an organization’s return-to-work program include:

- The expectation that workers participate and assurances that the employer will assist him or her in getting back to work.
- A degree of flexibility in the program so it can accommodate a variety of different situations.
- A statement that the program will be available for work and non-work related injuries.
- A commitment to reviewing the efficacy of the return-to-work program.

Industry safety leaders have repeatedly explained that the success of their program has relied on management’s willingness to engage in return-to-work and disability management programs as a cornerstone to their success. This applies to both current managers and newly hired managers.

Industry Tip: To help secure support from middle managers, appeal to both their business sense as well as their sense of compassion (i.e. benefits to employers AND workers)
Modified Work Policy Statement

ABC Company

Purpose:
The purpose of the Modified Work Program is to provide a process for assisting employees who are temporarily unable to perform some, or all, of their regular job functions due to injury or illness. The Modified Work Program helps sick or injured employees to return to productive work in a safe and timely manner.

Policy:
ABC Company will make every reasonable effort to provide suitable (temporary) modified employment to any employee unable to perform their regular duties. This may include a modification of the employee’s original position, providing alternate duties, providing transitional work, or providing a training opportunity.

Only suitable work that is in accordance with the WCB Temporary Modified Work Programs policy shall be considered for use in the modified work program.

Participants placed on modified work will be expected to provide feedback in order to improve the program.

All employees will be considered for placement in modified work, whether the injury or illness is work-related or non-work-related.

Signed:________________________  Date:____________________________
2. Assign a Return-to-Work Coordinator

Designating an individual to be in charge of return-to-work cases helps to ensure the program is running smoothly and efficiently. This helps to avoid confusion over who should be the primary contact for the WCB and who should be reviewing work-related medical documentation (i.e. job hazard analysis, physical limitations etc.) that relate to the worker’s restrictions.

This role is often assigned to someone internally within the organization and has a number of specific responsibilities:

- providing individualized planning, collaboration and coordination that is adapted to the worker’s initial and on-going needs – without disadvantaging co-workers and supervisors;
- ensuring that necessary communication does not break down at any point either with the worker, the WCB, short term disability, or long-term disability (as necessary); and
- ensuring that the worker and other staff who may be impacted by the worker’s modified duty plan understand what to expect and what is expected of them and help coordinate the execution of the plan.

Return-to-work coordinators may also:

- Facilitate case management (as required)
- Reinforce the organization’s return-to-work policy
- Provide education
- Collaborate with supervisors

The task of a return-to-work coordination can be challenging. There are times when the return-to-work coordinator may be asking other staff members to temporarily increase their daily workloads (or assist the injured worker in ways that they wouldn’t normally do) and so it will be important for the return-to-work coordinator to take those things into consideration when developing the gradual return-to-work plan.

This person may also be ultimately responsible for appeals as they relate to WCB entitlements and as such, the return-to-work coordinator should not be a direct supervisor if it can be avoided – as this may create a degree of tension and take away from the supportive culture that is being fostered in the workplace.

*Industry Tip:* If possible, avoid designating a direct supervisor as a return-to-work coordinator.
3. Develop Policies, Procedures and Forms

Policy *(if a more detailed policy is required)*

The presence of policies and practices impact both the chances of workers returning to work upon suffering an injury and how well they function upon returning.

For some organizations developing a more detailed policy can be helpful in providing clear structure for related procedures and can help to ensure that a process that is reflective of best practice is being followed. If organizations would like to create a more detailed return-to-work/modified work policy additional considerations include commitments to:

- Providing meaningful employment to injured employees as soon as medically possible consistent with an assessment by the injured employee’s healthcare practitioner, with the goal of offering the employee alternative suitable and available work that is comparable in nature and earnings to the employee’s pre-injury job.
- Ensuring the injured employee’s healthcare practitioner is given detailed information about the physical requirements of the worker’s pre-injury tasks.
- Including all parties in the process (the employer, employee, and if necessary—worker representative) of developing a written Individual RTW Plan for each injured employee.
- Monitoring the employee’s progress, recovery and return to work.
- Including strategies for maintenance and promotion of the program.
- Conducting regular internal evaluations of the RTW program for appropriateness and effectiveness.

The next step is to create a return-to-work procedure.

Some key questions to consider while developing policies and procedures may include:

- How will we ensure that workers injured on-site are aware of the return-to-work options and expectations prior to seeking medical treatment?
- How will the organization request the information required from the physician to safely accommodate modified duty restrictions?
Procedures

When developing a RTW procedure it’s best to proceed sequentially from the moment the incident occurs. We’ve included a sample decision matrix that could be used as the basis for developing a more comprehensive return-to-work procedure.

The following are some elements you may consider including in your organization’s RTW procedures:

1) Ensure that immediate first-aid requirements are met first and foremost
2) An initial written offer of sedentary duties presented to the injured worker has been shown to increase the likelihood of the worker returning to work without time lost (beyond the date of incident)
3) Be sure to include WCB reporting requirements in the procedure
4) Document all changes to the worker’s modified duties (i.e. gradual return-to-work) and have the worker sign that they agree to those changes (and inform the WCB)
5) Regular check-ins should be occurring with worker throughout their recovery
6) WCB should be informed once the worker has returned to full duties

There are some key documents that your organization will also want to develop as part of the return-to-work program.

- A memo for the injured worker helping them through the return-to-work process
- A written initial offer of sedentary duties (prior to the injured worker going to the healthcare practitioner)
- A fitness for work form
- A job hazard analysis
- A modified duty job bank

These documents can be combined together into a single RTW package. Resources have been included in this package to help organizations develop the above mentioned forms and documents.

**Note:** A separate ‘return-to-work package’ will be needed for each position as the job hazard analysis will be different and unique.
Injury Occurs

Report to shift supervisor & obtain appropriate basic first aid.

Can the worker return to work immediately?

Yes

Fill out Incident Record and submit to shift supervisor immediately. Return to full duties with no time lost.

No

If injury requires medical assistance then the worker will be presented with an interim offer of sedentary duties, sign that it has been reviewed, and given the injury package for healthcare practitioners.

The employer arranges transportation to appropriate medical facility of the worker's choosing.

Worker seeks medical attention and completes worker WCB form and submits to WCB. Employer completes employer WCB form and submit to manager ASAP to ensure reporting occurs within 72hrs of injury being reported.

Does the worker require accommodation to return to regular duties?

Yes

The worker formally accepts/declines the interim offer of sedentary duties.

Return-to-work coordinator creates a gradual return-to-work program respecting the healthcare practitioner's prescribed work restrictions (assisted by the modified duty job bank).

Formal offer of specific modified duty to be formally presented to worker.

No

Worker meets with the return-to-work coordinator prior to their next scheduled shift.

No time lost beyond date of injury. Worker returns to regular duties with healthcare practitioner's note.

Does the worker accept the offer?

Yes

Supervisor to regularly follows up with the employee to ensure current work duties are appropriate.

No

Contact WCB case manager, or adjudicator.

Inform WCB of any changes to modified duties and when the worker returns to full pre-incident duties.

= Forms have been included to assist you
In order to help guide employees through the first steps of the return-to-work process it can be helpful for employers to include a 'memo to workers' in the return-to-work package given to staff.

It is important to continue the supportive tone for the affected worker throughout the memo. The emphasis of the memo should be on the employer’s commitment to the staff member’s recovery (as opposed to focusing solely on the workplace factors).

The memo to staff helps remind the injured worker of:

- The employer’s commitment to the employee’s health, wellbeing and timely recovery
- The importance of giving the organization’s forms to the healthcare practitioner
- Who the return-to-work coordinator is and how to contact them

The memo can also include a caveat outlining that the WCB will be responsible for determining eligibility of the claim. This can help to alleviate confusion with regards to who is making those decisions and protect relationships with the employer should the staff member not be happy with decisions relating to their claim.

**Industry Tip:** Staff may sometimes feel flustered by the return-to-work process at its initial onset. The worker’s responsibilities should be simple and straightforward (with assistance available if required).

WCB-Alberta has created a sample memo for workers as a starting point for employers to create their own memo.
Memo to Worker

From: Case Coordinator ABC Company

To: Injured Worker

The policy of ABC Company is to do all that we can to speed an employee's recovery and return them to the workplace as quickly and as safely as possible following an injury. Please contact your supervisor or myself, ABC's Case Coordinator, if there is anything that we can do to assist you.

We have provided you with a package of information which includes these documents:

1) a Fitness for Work form;
2) a Physical Demands Analysis and job description of your current job; and
3) a Modified Duty Job Bank with a list of possible modified work opportunities.

Please give these forms to the Physician and ask that they be completed. Once completed, return them to us immediately. They are very important in assisting us with planning your return-to-work. If you cannot return these forms to us immediately after seeing your physician, contact either your supervisor or me at (XXX) 222-2222.

If you are off work beyond the day of injury, the WCB will first determine the acceptability of your claim and will then pay benefits of 90% of your net pay up to the yearly maximum level. I ask that you call me once every week while you are off work.

We wish you luck in your recovery; if you have any questions please do not hesitate to call.

Yours sincerely,

RTW Coordinator
Offer of Modified Work

COMPANY NAME: ________________________________

EMPLOYEE NAME: ________________________________

(Print full name)

In keeping with our policy to consider alternate suitable employment for any employee unable to perform their regular work due to injury, we are offering the following modified work placement.

The modified work position is ________________________________

(Name or description of position and department or location)

The duties you will be required to perform are as follows:

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

(Describe specific job duties and the physical requirements of the position)

The hours of work will be from _______ to _______, _______ _______ _______ _______ _______ _______ (Days of week)

The duration of the modified work placement will be from _______ _______ (Date) to _______ _______ (Date)

During the modified work placement your supervisor will be ________________________________

(Name of supervisor)

Your rate of pay will be ________________________________

(Pre-accident job rate recommended)

It is expected you will only perform the duties outlined above. _______ will monitor your progress and meet with you weekly to adjust your duties and/or length of placement as required based on your ability and relevant fitness information. If you have any difficulties performing the modified work please notify your supervisor immediately.
Reviewed □ Employee signature: ___________________________ Date: ____________

Offer accepted □ Offer rejected □

________________________________________________________ (Reason)

Employee signature: ___________________________ Date: ____________

Employer signature: ___________________________ Date: ____________

IMPORTANT

For WCB cases provide:

________________________________________________________ (Injured employee’s WCB claim number OR date of accident and SIN or birth date)

Fax directly to WCB adjudicator/case manager, if known, or to 780-427-5863.
Revisions to Offer of Modified Duty

Additional Duties Offered as Part of the Gradual Return-to-Work Program

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Employee Signature: __________________________  Date: ______________

Additional Duties Offered as Part of the Gradual Return-to-Work Program

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Employee Signature: __________________________  Date: ______________

Additional Duties Offered as Part of the Gradual Return-to-Work Program

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Employee Signature: __________________________  Date: ______________
Contact with Healthcare Providers

By informing the healthcare practitioner of the employer’s return–to-work program and the accommodations available to the injured employee, the healthcare practitioner can make informed decisions relating to return to work and modified duties that may be appropriate.

A review of research conducted on return-to-work interventions found that making early “contact between healthcare providers and the workplace, and making adjustments in the workplace to accommodate for an employee’s injury both result in shorter period of disability and lower costs.”


Responsibilities:

It is the employer’s responsibility to ensure that the healthcare practitioner has any “employment-related information that might be useful in giving medical advice and support” (Canadian Medical Association) to the injured worker. It is recommended that employers begin by providing healthcare practitioners with:

- A “Fitness for Work” form
  - A “Fitness for Work” form informs the healthcare practitioner of:
    - The existence of organization’s return-to-work program
    - The organization’s commitment to accommodate injury-related restrictions of employees
    - The employee’s written consent that the injury-related medical information be shared with the employer
    - A functional ability assessment
- A job task analysis / list of possible modified duties that could accommodate restrictions
  - The job task analysis / list of possible modified duties informs the healthcare provider of work options that are available to the injured employee. This can help the healthcare practitioner to easily identify work duties that the employee can engage in throughout the recovery process (or which regular work duties should be avoided).

Part of the incident response supervisor/manager procedure includes ensuring that [if the worker is not using an occupational injury service (OIS) clinic] they have an Injured Worker Package that contains the forms that doctors can fill out to help facilitate the return-to-work process.

If possible, it is a good idea to contact the clinic the employee will be attending to ensure they’re aware that the employee will be arriving. This can help to establish an open line of communication between the employer and physician and establish the importance of the return-to-work program.
Aside from the possible phone call that may be made to inform the clinic that an injured staff member will be arriving shortly, there is often very little direct contact between employers and healthcare practitioners. Healthcare practitioners are not mandated to use the forms you’ve provided and may simply report their findings to the WCB. This is why it is especially important the forms being submitted to healthcare practitioners be clear, concise and user-friendly.

If the forms that have been sent with the injured employee are not returned, the employer may consider sending both the “Modified Duty Job Bank” and “Fitness to Work” forms directly to the healthcare provider as an FYI.
Sample Fitness for Work form

Notice to Healthcare Provider – Fitness for Work

Company Contact: (Designated RTW Coordinator)

Phone: (###)####-#####
Fax: (###)####-#####

ABC Company is committed to helping workers achieve a successful recovery and return to work for our injured employees. Our disability management program is designed to accommodate almost all restrictions and allow return to work safely and at the earliest appropriate time using modified work alternatives when required.

By completing the fitness-for-work section of this form at time of treatment and faxing it to the above number (or have the employee return it) you’re helping us find suitable accommodations for injured workers. A reporting fee of $____ will be paid.

Authorization to Release Information (to be completed by injured employee)

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<th>Injury</th>
<th>Injury Date:</th>
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I hereby authorize my treating healthcare provider to release information related to my fitness for work.

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<th>Employee’s Name:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
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Fitness for Work (to be completed by treating healthcare provider)

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<th>Functional Abilities: If your patient is able to remain or return to work but has any limitations, please complete the applicable sections below.</th>
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<th>Walking:</th>
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<th>Lifting from floor to waist:</th>
<th>Lifting from waist to shoulder:</th>
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Does your patient have specific limitations with regards to:
- □ Bending
- □ Twisting
- □ Repetitive movement
- □ Pushing
- □ Pulling
- □ Stair Climbing
(Please specify below)

Does your patient have limited use of hands:
- □ Left
- □ Right
- □ Gripping
- □ Pinching
- □ Other

Are there any potential side effects from medication relating to this injury that could affect cognition (please specify below)

Cognitive Limitations:
- □ Difficulties performing simple and repetitive tasks
- □ Problems maintaining focus/concentration on the job
- □ Limited ability to perform complex and varied tasks
- □ Reduced energy and pace required for the job
**Additional Comments**: If “Other” has been checked above, or more information required – please explain here

Healthcare Provider’s Name:

(Please Print)

Healthcare Provider’s Signature:

Payment Address:
Job Hazard Analysis

To help the treating healthcare practitioner get a simple overall picture of the injured worker it is recommended that the employer prepare a job hazard analysis (JHA). This will give an overview of how often the worker is required to perform certain physical activities throughout a typical workday.

The JHA should summarize key pieces of information including:

- How often is that worker required to use various body positions
- How are staff required to exert force
- How much force is required

An employer could start by establishing frequency of various types of lifts (see below)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never (0% of shift)</th>
<th>Rarely (1-5% of shift or less often)</th>
<th>Occasionally (6-33% of shift or less often)</th>
<th>Frequently (34-66% of shift or less often)</th>
<th>Constantly (67-100% of shift or less often)</th>
<th>Typical Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Level Lifting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.4 kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(below the waist)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waist Level Lifting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9.1 kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above Shoulder Lifting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.4 kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front Carry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9.3 kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side Carry—Right Hand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.5 kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side Carry—Left Hand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.5 kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side Carrying on Shoulder</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second step in the development of a frequency table is to establish the weight/force required at different frequencies. For example: staff may be required to lift heavy items but those lifts may be performed infrequently during a shift (see example below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manual Handling Tasks</th>
<th>Description of objects handling [Weight/force (lb)]</th>
<th>FREQUENCY OF WORKDAY / SHIFT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e.g. Low Level Lifting</td>
<td>Box of 24 bottles of water (18 lb), bag of cement mix (66 lb)</td>
<td>Not Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>66 lb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Place the heaviest weight/force handled into the appropriate box.

It is also recommended that employers include information relating to the additional critical job demands. The table below is an example for healthcare aides.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manual Handling Tasks</th>
<th>Never (0% of shift)</th>
<th>Rarely (1-5% of shift or less)</th>
<th>Occasionally (6-33% of shift or less often)</th>
<th>Frequently (34-66% of shift or less often)</th>
<th>Constantly (67-100% of shift or less often)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sitting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushing (tools or objects)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulling (tools or objects)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forward Bending</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trunk Rotation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking—Outdoors</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking—Indoors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking—Uneven Ground</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climbing—Stairs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climbing—Ladders</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climbing—other things like stools or equipment.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crouching or squatting</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kneeling or crawling</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaching—Above shoulder level</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaching—Below shoulder level</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand Use—Dominant hand</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand Use—Non-Dominant hand</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forceful Gripping—Dominant hand</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forceful Gripping—Non-Dominant hand</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Modified Duty Job Bank

It is recommended that employers prepare a modified duty job bank to ensure that following an incident the employer is able to provide meaningful and productive work to injured workers in a timely fashion. This can be done either for the entire workplace, or be specific to departments (or specific roles) within the facility.

The CCSA has developed some sample modified duty job banks as a place to start for employers. These lists should be customized for each facility and should involve input from supervisors/workers and reviewed/updated regularly.

Modified duties should be categorized by the amount of force required and the length of time that the opportunity would be available:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Force Required</th>
<th>Duration of Duty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited Level—up to 11 lbs</td>
<td>Occasionally—up to 1/3 of workday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light Level—12-22 lbs</td>
<td>Frequently—up to 2/3 of workday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Level—23-44 lbs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The CCSA has developed and included a number of modified duty job bank examples for each department. These lists were created in consultation with select industry representatives and National Occupational Classification (NOC) codes job descriptions/duties. The lists SHOULD not be considered exhaustive and should be expanded upon by organizations prior to implementation.

Also, given that the modified duty job bank samples are templates—these lists do not take into account specific injuries or limitations that affected workers may have.

Organizations should also consider any collective bargaining agreements that may place restrictions on the kinds of job tasks that can be offered. Note: the WCB will accept offers that are meaningful and productive work (that adequately accommodate for the worker’s restrictions).

What follows is a list of duties that may apply to any injured worker regardless of department (instead of being focused on any one department). This list could be used in combination with the staff member’s department specific modified duty job bank.
All Departments

Limited Level (Sedentary):

- Expand on current modified duty job bank
- Perform workplace/safety inspections
- Update SDS (MSDS) binders throughout the facility
- Ensure safety forms are fully stocked throughout the facility (near-miss, hazards, incidents etc.)
- Brainstorm ‘safety topics’ for ‘safety talks’
- Distribute safety perception surveys to departments
- Attend refresher training (for example: First Aid, WHMIS etc.)
- Assist with orientation preparation and training
- Purge or shred files
- Check eye-wash bottles for expiry
- Update safety bulletin boards
- Ensure OHS binders throughout the facility are complete and up-to-date
- Post safety posters throughout the facility
- Review and update hazard assessments
- Ensure emergency contact information is up-to-date and available in all departments
- Assist manager with clerical tasks; telephones
- Assist with seasonal decorations/displays
- Cleaning cupboards
- Refill soap, paper towel, and sanitizer dispensers throughout the facility
- Assist with event planning (i.e. staff parties etc.)

Light Level:

- Checking/restocking PPE
- Restock facility’s vending machines
- Sort recycling
- Take out garbage

Please note: the above lists should be reviewed for suitability, accuracy and customized as needed by employers.
Department: Nursing

Limited Level (Sedentary):

- Medication Administration (RNs/LPNs)
- Administer injections
- Inventory medications
- Thin/review resident Health Records
- Re-page resident Health Records
- Checking resident's vital signs (blood pressure etc.)
- Collecting body fluid specimens
- Do resident nail care; hand massages
- Clean nail care kits, eye glasses, and hearing aids
- Assist with clerical tasks; telephones
- Clean telephones; hi-touch areas
- Check resident clothing/supplies; notify families
- Answer call bells and if unable to assist reassure client you will find someone who can
- Check first aid kit supplies and restock
- Restock supply rooms; tub rooms
- Check water temperature for tubs
- Perform comprehensive sling inspections
- Resident meal assistance (feeding)
- Read to residents
- Assist with arts and crafts
- Sew
- Supervise residents outside
- Sweep
- Stand-by assist for independent predictable residents
- Visit 1:1 with residents
- Prepare admission packages
- Add timesheets
- Assist with staff scheduling; calling staff
- Clean wheelchairs; walkers; canes
- Restock personal care supplies (peri-wash etc.)
- Check and restock blood spill and outbreak kits
- Check sharp disposal containers
- Clean supply/linen carts
- Clean and tidy bedside drawers; closets
- Resident meal assistance (serving)
- Assist residents with hair care; shaving
- Assist residents with washing face, hands
- Deliver water jugs; snacks
- Clean tubs/showers after use
- Clean call bell cords; side rails
- Assist with showers of residents
- Applying compression stockings
- Administering eye drops, lotions and creams
- Performing weight checks of residents
- Wound care
- Update transfer logos
- Ensure care plans are up-to-date
- Test call bells
Light Level:

- Walk with residents
- Assist residents with dressing
- Porter residents
- Operate mechanical lifts

- Assist with showers of residents
- Fold laundry
- Make beds

Please note: the above lists should be reviewed for suitability, accuracy and customized as needed by employers.
Department: Dietary/Kitchen

Limited Level (Sedentary):

- Empty wastepaper basket
- Add timesheets
- Light cleaning and dusting common areas
- Clean high touch areas- handrail; door handles
- Tidy; organize shelves in kitchen
- Set dining room tables for meals
- Assist with staff scheduling; calling staff
- Sweeping
- Mopping
- Tidy; organize shelves in kitchen
- Washing and rinsing food
- Performing food prep work (including cutting, chopping, slicing etc.)
- Fill/clean the salad bar
- Performing temperature checks of fridge/freezer
- Assist head chef/baker etc.
- Scrubbing dishes by hand
- Put dishes away
- Check inventory levels of supplies for re-ordering
- Survey the condition of equipment in the kitchen/dining area
- Clean countertops
- Serve food in cafeteria/dining room
- Monitor buffet
- Cleaning appliances
- Descaling steamer
- Clean kitchen supply carts
- Load and unload dishwasher
- Tidy and clean staff rooms
- Clear dining room dishes after meals
- Taking out the garbage
- Cleaning and filling the juice/milk machine
- Unloading groceries / putting away groceries
- Cleaning canopies
- Cleaning fridge/freezer
- Wiping tables
- Clean/wipe chairs
- Assist with menu planning
- Grocery shopping
- Opening cans
- Sharpening knives
- Deliver food to resident’s room
- Plating food
- Wash/sanitize garbage cans and recycle bins
- Sorting cutlery
- Wrapping cutlery
- Walls/back splash cleaning
- Cleaning rubber mats
- Cleaning windows
- Restocking condiments
- Bleach cups for stain removal
- Packing and dating leftovers

Please note: the above list should be reviewed for suitability, accuracy and customized as needed by employers.
Department: Support Services - Housekeeping

Limited Level (Sedentary):

- Tidy/Clean staff room
- Tidy/Clean common areas
- Vacuum
- Dust
- Wash windows
- Wash window screens
- Answer phones
- File paperwork
- Sort invoices or bills
- Sweep
- Undertake minor repairs
- Set-up (meeting rooms etc.)
- Empty waste baskets
- Clean cigarette receptacles
- Polish fixtures
- Restock housekeeping supplies/carts
- Restock washrooms with soap/paper towel
- Cleaning toilets
- Cleaning sinks
- Washing walls
- Washing handrails
- Moving furniture
- Buffing/waxing floors
- Diluting cleaning products (refill spray bottles etc.)
- Washing doors
- Cleaning tubs and showers
- Cleaning baseboards
- Watering plants
- Stocking storage room
- Taking inventory of current supply levels for reordering
- Making beds
- Vacuum furniture
- Washing blinds
- Washing curtains
- Washing ceilings
- Cleaning light fixtures
- Folding laundry
- Wash/sanitize garbage cans and recycle bins
- Shampoo carpets
- Clean elevator
- Wash stairwell
- Inspecting equipment (i.e. carts, vacuums, floor cleaners etc.)
- Check preventative maintenance schedule to ensure all equipment is ‘up-to-date’

Please note: the above list should be reviewed for suitability, accuracy and customized as needed by employers.
Department: Support Services - Laundry

Limited Level (Sedentary):

- Folding laundry
- Sorting clean laundry
- Collecting/transporting soiled laundry
- Distribute clean laundry
- Loading/Unloading Washer
- Loading/Unloading Dryer
- Ironing
- Empty lint traps
- Cleaning laundry appliances
- Checking and restocking laundry supplies
- Wash/sanitize garbage cans and recycle bins

Department: Therapeutic Services (Recreation/Rehabilitation)

Limited Level (Sedentary):

- Participate in recreation program/activities (creating crafts etc.)
- Participate in rehabilitation activities
- Accompany residents on outings
- Assist with residents on outing
- Assist with residents walking programs
- Read to residents i.e. daily newspaper
- Play cards/bingo with residents
- Tidy; organize shelves
- Deliver mail to residents
- Label; re-label resident equipment
- Enter participation data
- Complete Rec/Rehab OH&S inspection
- Clean Rec/Rehab carts
- Participate in craft activities with residents
- Assist with Rehab therapy exercises
- Take residents outdoors
- Write letters for residents
- Visit 1:1 with residents
- Deliver hot packs
- Take inventory of mattresses; walker and other equipment/supplies
- Contact, book volunteers
- Porter to Rehab/Recreation programs
- Check games for missing pieces
- Inspect equipment
- Prepare/set-up activities
- Set-up/put away tables
- Set-up/put away chairs
- Assist with activity planning / activity schedule
- Leading activities
- Clean exercise equipment
- Clean bird cage
- Clean fish tanks
- Review preventative maintenance schedule to ensure it is ‘up-to-date’

Please note: the above lists should be reviewed for suitability, accuracy and customized as needed by employers.
Department: Office/administrative

Limited Level (Sedentary):

- Assist with telephones
- Keyboarding/computer work
- Add timesheets
- Photocopying for all departments
- Update telephone and other lists
- Label file folders
- Data entry for departments
- Remake signs for various departments
- Laminate signs
- Prepare packages for resident mailboxes
- Prepare return-to-work packages
- Make labels
- Re-type meal cards
- Filing and other paperwork related activities
- Put away office supplies
- Delivery of newspapers
- Tidy; organize; dust shelves, cupboards & desks
- Assist with supply inventory
- Restock paper and other supplies
- Conduct tours
- Bank deposits
- Open, stamp, and deliver mail
- Collate booklets and materials
- Sweeping

Department: Maintenance

Limited Level (Sedentary):

- Organize; sort; file work orders
- Tidy; organize maintenance carts
- Review maintenance schedules of equipment to ensure compliance
- Create inventory of tools/supplies and re-order as necessary
- Complete room inspections
- Touch-up paint
- Painting
- Plumbing repairs
- Electrical repairs
- Cutting grass
- Gardening
- Planting/transplanting plants
- Using fertilizer
- Buffing/Waxing floors
- Complete boiler room checks
- Complete nurse call system room checks
- Check pendants/pagers
- Complete temperature checks
- Informal building inspection for hazards
- Informal grounds inspection for hazards
- Check building doors
- Change light bulbs
- Synchronize clock times throughout the facility
- Clean and maintain tools
- Change door handles and fixtures
- Check crawl-spaces/attics
- Changing air filters
- Shampoo carpets
• Garbage removal
• Spray insecticide/pesticide
• Spread sand/de-icer etc.
• Complete fire extinguisher checks

• Coordinate contractors
• Emergency light testing
• Testing smoke alarms
• Testing emergency exits

**Light Level:**

• Using leaf blower
• Using weed whacker

• Tree, bush or hedge trimming
• Snow removal

Please note: the above lists should be reviewed for suitability, accuracy and customized as needed by employers.
Adjusting Modified Duty Programs

Once a modified duty program has been put in place, there should include a process that monitors the workers progress and revises the modified duties as the worker recovers and performs more tasks. In order for this review to happen, open communication between the injured worker, the physician and the employer (or return-to-work coordinator) needs to be consistent. It is hard for the employer/return-to-work coordinator to revise modified duties if they are unaware of the worker’s recovery progress.

If an injured worker is not providing the necessary information to review and revise their modified duties, the Workers Compensation Act Part 4 Section 35 Progress Report allows for an employer to submit a written request to the Board for a report on the progress that the injured worker is making. As WCB Alberta is subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act, WCB will provide only the information relevant to the case. Employers are provided with access to a claimant’s personal information for the limited purposes of:

- Return to work planning
- Understanding medical rehabilitation
- Understanding decision made by WCB
- To decide upon or advance a review or appeal

Employers must keep all employee information confidential.

Modified duty programs are an important component to getting an injured worker back to work. While these programs are typically used for workers that were injured at the workplace, they can also be used to accommodate workers that may have been injured outside of work. Regardless of where the injury was sustained, the absence of workers from the workplace still has the same effect on an organization and the worker.
4. Educate All Staff

Staff need to know the benefits of the program, what is expected of them and how the organization will help them get back to work quickly.

Once the related policies and procedures are in place the next step is to ensure all staff are made aware of the program.

Initial training on the organization’s return-to-work program should be included in new hire orientation and should be supplemented by regular refreshers for all staff.

There are many potential benefits for staff who are actively engaged in their organization’s return-to-work program which should be emphasized during training.

Training should also include:

- An explanation of the organization’s policy/policies relating to return-to-work
- A description of the return-to-work procedures including:
  - What will be offered to them by the employer in the event of an injury
  - What the employee is expected to do when an injury occurs
  - What the employee should expect with regards to gradual return to work, follow-up etc.
- Communication about the importance of everyone supporting each other while workers are on modified duties (to reinforce a positive return-to-work culture)

Management should also receive training related to the policy and procedures for modified duty /return-to-work and about the needs of injured workers who are returning to work.

Remember: Refresher training can be done informally!!

Industry Training Tips:
1. Keep the messaging clear and concise
2. If possible, provide quick-reference materials as handouts (should an injury occur)
3. Use training to reinforce the positive tone of the program
5. Promote Your Program (Ongoing)

If all workers are expected to engage in the organization’s return-to-work program, management should regularly advertise and support participation in the program. Staff may find the promotion of the program reassuring and indicative of management’s commitment to the program.

As previously mentioned, promotion of the organization’s return-to-work program should be included in new hire orientation and refresher training that is provided for all workers, additional support for the program should be supplemented in other ways.

In order to successfully promote the return-to-work program, the organization should endeavour to regularly update their messaging to help ensure that the posters, brochures, pamphlets etc. do not become stagnant.

A number of sample resources have been created by worker’s compensation boards across the country for employers to access as required. Resources include: posters, pamphlets, newsletters, paystubs and leaflets.

WCB Alberta https://www.wcb.ab.ca/return-to-work/

WCB Manitoba: https://www.wcb.mb.ca/return-to-work-employer-info


CCSA Modified Work Wallet Card:  
6. Implement and Evaluate

Once the RTW/DM program is in place the last and final step is to use the program whenever an injury occurs and ensure that the processes are effective.

Evaluation is important to ensure that the return-to-work program is achieving what you had set out for it to do—both for the workers and the employers.

To help ensure that affected workers had a positive experience with the organization’s return-to-work program it is recommended that quick evaluations be conducted after a worker has returned to work (regardless of any restrictions). These case-by-case observations can help employers to make simple changes or changes that may require immediate attention.

A worker evaluation form should be quick-and-easy for the affected worker to fill out. For example, a short worker evaluation form might include the following questions:

- Did you feel that your modified duty program helped improve your rehabilitation and allowed you to return to work in a safe and appropriate manner?
- Did you feel that the duties assigned were appropriate and meaningful?
- Did you feel supported throughout this return-to-work program?
- Did you feel pressure from anyone to complete duties that you feel were not appropriate based on your injury?
- Please provide any comments or suggestions that you feel will help improve the modified duty program.

A more comprehensive evaluation of the injury response and return-to-work program should be conducted regularly. These larger-scale evaluations should allow you to ensure that the program's objectives are consistently met and can help you to see trends in metrics and identify areas of improvement.

WCB Alberta has developed an audit tool to help assess if your program is achieving the legislated responsibilities for Alberta. This tool can be found at: https://www.wcb.ab.ca/assets/pdfs/employers/WCB015_claims_audit_self_evaluation.pdf

Reminders

The importance of establishing and maintaining a positive and supportive culture around your organization’s return-to-work program cannot be overstated—it will influence the way managers, supervisors, injured workers and coworkers engage in and support the program.

Return-to-work programs are great for employers and workers. The messaging may be different for employers and workers in the organization but everyone should know that the organization’s RTW program is a worthwhile endeavour.
Injury Investigation and Appeals

While following all the steps to creating a RTW program and having it readily available when needed will assist with successful return to work, there may be difficult situations and circumstances that arise. As an employer, it is important to be aware of the legislation and any available information that can help manage these difficult situations. It must be noted that all injuries, illnesses and individuals are different, making every case or claim unique. Therefore, the following information may not be applicable to all situations.

New Evidence

WCB requires that all parties involved with a claim take reasonable efforts to provide all relevant information at the time of the initial decision. However, there may be times when information is brought forward after a claim is processed, and this new evidence may influence the decision of the claim. Once an employer is in possession of new evidence, there are steps that they can take to submit this information.

Remember that WCB-Alberta outlines that for a claim to be covered the accident or injury must meet the 2 following criteria:

1. must occur out of employment and be caused by an employment hazard (something in the workplace contributed to the resulting injury or accident)
2. must occur during the course of employment (happens in a time and place consistent with the responsibilities and expectations of that employment)

WCB will consider any new evidence, and if appropriate, modify or reverse its previous decision. New evidence is classified as new information that has the potential to affect the outcome of the previous WCB decision. There are two basic criteria that new evidence must meet in order to be considered by WCB:

1. the evidence is material (relevant) to the claim in question
2. the evidence is substantive – it gives new information that was not previously available to the decision maker and could affect the outcome of the decision

Information is not considered new evidence when it simply explains or summarizes information that was previously reviewed by the decision-maker in a different way. Instead, new evidence may include:

- health information
- work-relatedness
- information about employer operations
- administrative reviews that identify previous errors or omissions in the appeal findings
- other relevant facts
If new evidence that is presented was reasonably available at the time of the initial decision, WCB will take into consideration why this information was not provided at the time. Depending on the circumstance, WCB may decide not to accept the information as new evidence.

The decision to accept the information as new evidence is made by the review or appeal body that was responsible for making the original decision. The new evidence decision process is subject to the same right of review or appeal as any other adjudicative decision. For more information on right of review or determining body, see WCB Appeals Process section below.

New evidence is not subject to the same time restrictions as submitting a new claim; however, there may be other limitations when new evidence is related to a decision that was made after an extended period of time. These limitations include factors such as the WCB’s limited ability to contact witnesses, access necessary documentation, medical records, etc.

When new evidence is accepted, and the review results in a new decision, the involved parties have the same right of review or appeal as any other adjudicative decision.

If the review does not result in a new decision, the time frames for further review or appeal of the original decision remain the same. All requests for review or appeal must be made within one year from the original date of the decision.

**Aggravation of a Pre-existing Injury**

When an incident occurs, there is a possibility that it may aggravate a worker’s pre-existing condition. Some pre-existing conditions may be significant and affect the disability period of the worker, while others may not affect the period of disability at all.

WCB Policy 03-02 Part I defines a pre-existing condition as: “any pathological condition which, based on a confirmed diagnosis or medical judgement, pre-dated to a work-related injury.”

Aggravation is defined as “the clinical effect of a compensable accident on a pre-existing condition, resulting in temporary or permanent clinical impairment and/or loss of earning capacity.”

If an incident causes a pre-existing condition to worsen or become symptomatic to the extent that a worker is no longer able to perform all tasks, WCB will allow a claim on the basis of an aggravation factor.

In order for a claim to be considered under this policy there must be clear documentation of the pre-existing condition and evidence that the condition was aggravated by the compensable incident. WCB will analyze the correlation between the pre-existing condition and the incident. Factors that will be considered in this analysis include:

- the mechanism of injury
- severity of the pre-existing condition
- the degree that the injury may have affected the condition

If a worker has a pre-existing condition, but the disability does not correlate with the incident, the claim will not fall under this policy. WCB does not provide coverage for treatment or lay-off from work if it is entirely
due to a pre-existing condition.

**Cost Relief**

There are exceptional circumstances when WCB may relieve the employer of all or a portion of the claim costs associated with a compensable incident. When an employer is relieved of claims costs, these costs are removed from the employers experience rating and distributed where WCB determines appropriate. With a focus on cost relief in relation to pre-existing conditions, there are a number of circumstances that may take place. It is important to remember that in all cases involving pre-existing conditions, there must be medical evidence of the pre-existing condition.

If a compensable incident aggravates a pre-existing condition and the disablement period is a reasonable consequence of the accident, claim costs will not be relieved.

If the pre-existing condition is a separate factor or is aggravated by the incident and causes an increase to the period or degree of disablement, the costs of the prolonged period are relieved.

If a compensable incident has caused a new injury and in conjunction aggravated a pre-existing condition, claim costs will not be relieved, unless the separate pre-existing condition has prolonged the disablement period.

For more information on WCB Experience Rating, see “WCB Policy Manual: Policy 07-02, Part II, Application 2, Experience Rating”.

**WCB Appeals Process**

Employers who are dissatisfied with an adjudicative decision have the right to request a review of the decision or to appeal the decision. A request for review or an appeal must be made within one year from the date of the original decision. The review and appeal processes must follow a specific sequence of steps. A decision must first undergo an internal review conducted by WCB. If an employer is still dissatisfied after the internal review, a request can be made for an external review through the Appeals Commission.

1. During this step, the employer will contact their adjudicator (the one who made the decision). The
The adjudicator will explain the reasoning for the decision and all considerations that were made. If there is any new evidence that may change the decision, the employer will present it at this time. If the employer is still dissatisfied after this step, they will continue to step 2.

2. A “Request for Review” form (G040) must be completed (this can be found on the WCB’s website at: https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https://www.wcb.ab.ca/assets/pdfs/global/G040.doc) Once WCB receives this request, the employer will then work with a supervisor to resolve the disagreement. In 2014, 47.5% of reviewed claims were resolved in these first two steps. If the employer still has concerns, WCB will forward the request to the Dispute Resolution and Decision Review Body (DRDRB).

3. A review specialist will contact the employer to outline and confirm the specific issues and concerns and to ensure that the employer understands in full detail the original decision of the WCB. Once this information in confirmed, the specialist will review the file, and a written decision will be mailed to the employer when the review has been completed.

4. If the employer is not satisfied with the decision of the DRDRB, the final step is to appeal the DRDRB’s decision through the Appeals Commission. The employer has one year from the DRDRB’s decision to request an appeal. Eligible employers can request assistance through the Employer Appeal Consulting (EAC) service to prepare for a review by the Appeal’s Commission.

For more information on the appeal process contact the Appeals Commission or visit their website: www.appealscommission.ab.ca

For more information on the EAC service contact WCB or visit the website: https://www.wcb.ab.ca/claims/review-and-appeals/for-employers/emp_appeal.asp

Disability Duration Reference

The following tables, that were provided with permission from the WCB, provide an estimation of the time that may be required for workers to return to work after various injuries and treatments. It is important to note that the maximum time given is not necessarily a definite RTW date. If a worker reaches the maximum time, this is when questions should be asked as to why the worker has not returned to work, or what is causing a prolonged recovery.

There are various factors that may affect the estimated recovery durations. Main factors that may influence the duration of disability can include:

- Psychological factors
- Age
- Medical Complications
- Medication
- Individual Variation
### Head/trunk/spine: Soft Tissue Injuries: Sprains and Strains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cervical</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job Classification</td>
<td>RTW: Minimum/Maximum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Work</td>
<td>0 weeks – 4 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light Work</td>
<td>0 weeks – 5 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Work</td>
<td>0 weeks – 6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy Work</td>
<td>Medical consultant opinion based on medical reporting if layoff exceeds 6 weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lumbosacral</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job Classification</td>
<td>RTW: Minimum/Maximum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Work</td>
<td>0 weeks – 2 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light Work</td>
<td>0 weeks – 2 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Work</td>
<td>0 weeks – 3 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy Work</td>
<td>0 weeks – 4 weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Upper Extremities: Soft tissue injuries: Sprains and Strains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shoulder/Wrist/Elbow/Fingers</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job Classification</td>
<td>RTW: Minimum/Maximum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Work</td>
<td>0 days – 3 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light Work</td>
<td>0 days – 3 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Work</td>
<td>1 weeks – 4 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy Work</td>
<td>2 weeks – 4 weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rotator Cuff Tendinitis/Strain: first to third degree</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job Classification</td>
<td>RTW: Minimum/Maximum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Limited Work
- **Limited Work**: 0 days – 4 days

### Light Work
- **Light Work**: 0 days – 1 weeks

### Medium Work
- **Medium Work**: 2 weeks – 6 weeks

### Heavy Work
- **Heavy Work**: 4 weeks – 12 weeks

### Lower Extremities: Soft tissue injuries: Sprains and strains

#### Knee: Medial and Lateral Collateral Ligaments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Classification</th>
<th>RTW: Minimum/Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited Work</td>
<td>0 weeks – 1 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light Work</td>
<td>0 weeks – 2 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Work</td>
<td>2 weeks – 8 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy Work</td>
<td>2 weeks – 12 weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Anterior Cruciate Ligament Tear (without surgery) and Posterior Cruciate Ligament Tear

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Classification</th>
<th>RTW: Minimum/Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited Work</td>
<td>3 weeks – 4 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light Work</td>
<td>4 weeks – 6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Work</td>
<td>6 weeks – 8 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy Work</td>
<td>8 weeks – 12 weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Ankle: Without chronic instability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Classification</th>
<th>RTW: Minimum/Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited Work</td>
<td>0 days – 3 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light Work</td>
<td>10 days – 3 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Work</td>
<td>10 days – 3 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy Work</td>
<td>3 weeks – 6 weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion:

Organizations implementing a return-to-work program and disability management may find many of the resources included in this booklet to be valuable references. Using this material as a starting point should provide employers with the direction needed to begin implementing a successful return-to-work and disability management program.

For further information regarding the development of a return-to-work program it is recommended that organizations contact WCB Alberta:

Inside Alberta: 1-866-922-9221

Outside Alberta: 1-800-661-9608 (in Canada)


Alberta Workers' Compensation Board. *Disability Duration Reference Documents*


Additional Resources:

Access HR:

Alberta Human Rights Commission:
http://www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/MedicalInformationEmployees.pdf

Alberta Public Service Human Resource Plan:

Algonquin College:

Annapolis Valley Regional School Board:

The Association of Worker’s Compensation Boards of Canada: http://awcbc.org/

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety:
http://www.ccohs.ca/products/webinars/return_work2/

Canadian Human Rights Commission:
http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/sites/default/files/accommodation_works_application_manual_format.pdf


Canadian Pacific:
http://www.tcrc355.com/legislative/return_to_work_packages.html

Career Edge Organization:
https://www.careeredge.ca/ceoblog/the-return-to-work-5-tips-for-welcoming-back-employees-with-disabilities/

Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace:
https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/pdf/weathering_the_perfect_legal_storm_BEV_E.pdf
The Conference Board of Canada:

Construction Association of Thunder Bay:
http://www.catb.on.ca/June%2018th%202009/final%20version%20of%20detailed%20RTW%20policy.revised.docx


Disability Management Employer Coalition: http://dmec.org/category/resources/white-papers/


Government of Alberta:
http://www.chr.alberta.ca/health/resources/tip-sheet-for-supervisors.pdf

Government of Australia – Comcare:
http://www.comcare.gov.au/recovery/returning_to_work/steps_in_returning_to_work

Government of Canada:

HRinfodesk:
http://www.hrinfodesk.com/preview.asp?article=23267

Institute for Work & Health:
http://www.iwh.on.ca/

International Risk Management Inc.:
https://www.irmi.com/articles/
http://hr.lakeheadu.ca/uploads/Return_to_Work_Policy.doc

Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory:
https://returntowork.llnl.gov/pdfs/procedures.pdf

Macquarie University:

McMaster University – School of Nursing:

Mohawk College:

MyMatrixx:
https://www.mymatrixx.com/best-practices-for-return-to-work-programs/

National Disability Institute’s LEAD Center:

New York State Workers’ Compensation Board:

Occupational Health and Safety Agency for Healthcare in BC:

Ontario Workplace Safety and Insurance Board – WSIB: www.wsib.on.ca

Return to Work – Knowledge Base: http://www.rtwknowledge.org/

Return to Work Matters: http://www.rtwmatters.org/

Riverside County Human Resources:
http://workcomp.rc-hr.com/Portals/26/New_Claim_Reporting_Process_CorVel.pdf

Safetydriven.ca – Trucking Safety Council of BC:

SAIF Corporation – Workers’ Compensation Insurance in Oregon:
http://www.saif.com/Documents/Forms/RTW-Sample-Policy.pdf
San Diego Community College District:


State Board of Workers’ Compensation – Georgia

Sutherland-Schultz:

UC Berkeley:
https://uhs.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/dms-supervisor toolkit.pdf

University of Waterloo:

University of London – SOAS: http://www.soas.ac.uk/hr/procedures/leave/sicknessproc/returnworkguide/

University of South Florida:
http://usfweb2.usf.edu/human-resources/pdfs/employee-relations/workers-comp-USF-RTW.pdf

U.S. Department of Labor:
http://www.dol.gov/odep/return-to-work/


Workers’ Compensation Board of Alberta:
https://www.wcb.ab.ca/
https://www.wcb.ab.ca/return-to-work/return-to-work-planning/formalizing-a-modified-work-program.html
https://www.wcb.ab.ca/assets/pdfs/workers/RTWPM_prep sheet.pdf
https://wcb.ab.ca/assets/pdfs/employers/employer_handbook.pdf
https://www.wcb.ab.ca/assets/pdfs/employers/EFS_Questioning_a_WCB_decision.pdf
Workers’ Compensation Board of Manitoba:
https://www.wcb.mb.ca/sites/default/files/Sample%20Functional%20Ability%20Forms1.pdf
https://www.wcb.mb.ca/return-to-work-information

Workers’ Compensation Board of Nova Scotia:
http://www.wcb.ns.ca/Return-To-Work/Your-Return-to-Work-Program.aspx

Workers’ Compensation Board of Saskatchewan:

Workers’ Safety and Compensation Commission of Northwest Territories:
http://wscc.nt.ca/

Workplace Health, Safety & Compensation Commission of Newfoundland and Labrador:
http://www.whsccl.ca/policiesandprocedures.whsc

Worksafe BC:
http://www.worksafebc.com/claims/rehab_and_rtw/default.asp
http://www.worksafebc.com/claims/rehab_and_rtw/rtw_employers/start_a_return-to-work_program/default.asp

Worksafe Montana:

Worksafe Victoria:

The CCSA would also like to thank the following organizations for sharing their organization’s internal documents as a reference.

Carewest

Connecting Care

Reversa Inc.

Shepherd’s Care Foundation