



TECHNICAL UPDATE

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RETURN-TO-WORK PROGRAM

A return-to-work program enables employees to resume their duties after an injury or illness, even if they have specific medical restrictions that prevent them from performing their current role at full capacity. This program ensures that employees remain active and valued members of the workforce while they recover, with the expectation that they will return to total capacity within a reasonable period. By implementing this practice, the employer demonstrates employee support, fostering continued engagement among the county staff.

The benefits to the employer include a reduction in lost work hours, lower workers' compensation costs, and decreased employee turnover. Statistics show that the likelihood of an injured employee returning to work diminishes significantly each month they remain out of work.

By providing a short-term modification of a job or alternative work based on the employee's current abilities or limitations, the employee is more likely to return to full duty sooner. A well-implemented modified work program helps maintain the connection between the employer and the employee, preventing the sense of alienation that can develop during prolonged absences from the workplace.

CRAFTING EFFECTIVE POLICIES

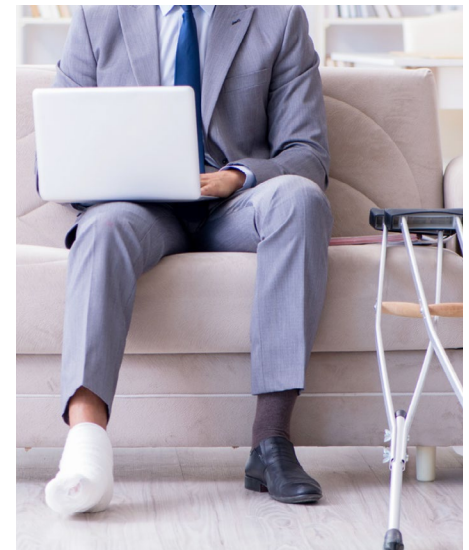
Many counties have policies that guide their return-to-work programs. These policies should clearly outline expectations for both the employee and employer. They should specify how and when medical updates will be provided, the process for assessing and offering modified duty, and the maximum duration that modified duty will be available.

Modified duty work assignments should be clearly defined and include the following:

- Clearly defined job duties, tasks, responsibilities, and expectations that align with the employee's medical restrictions.
- Established timeline for receiving medical updates from the healthcare provider.
- Expectations for communication between the employee, supervisor, and the return-to-work coordinator.
- Specified duration for which modified duty work will be offered.

Counties do not have to create work, but we encourage you to be creative and think of other ways the employee can assist outside their regular duties. Assignments should not be seen as punitive or demeaning but should help the county achieve its overall objectives. Below are suggestions to consider offering:

- Participate in online learning opportunities, such as studying for certifications, leadership development, or safety training.
- Help with research or data entry.
- Assist with inventory or asset management, and ordering supplies.
- Clean out or organize storage areas.
- Document scanning or archiving.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR COUNTIES

Return-to-Work programs enhance employee morale, lower workers' compensation claim costs, reduce turnover, and improve the overall culture and functioning of the workplace. If you believe that light duty might be feasible for an employee recovering from an injury and need assistance in facilitating their return, please contact CTSI for guidance at (303) 861-0507.