



return-to-work programs

Once an injured employee's medical needs are addressed, the focus should shift to coordinating a safe return to work. Lost days due to an injury are the leading cost driver in workers' compensation claims, but there are several programs and options to help reduce and control lost time depending on the employee's injury and the employer's ability to accommodate work restrictions. CompManagement Health Systems (CHS) can help clients develop an appropriate return-to-work plan to fit their individual needs.

Early return to work

Below are some key factors to consider to facilitate an early return to work while ensuring safety for all parties.

- **Medical provider relationships** – The treating physician must release an employee before they can actually go back to work. The process can run more smoothly if the employer has established a relationship with local physicians and provider groups, and has educated them on the company's operations and modified duty options.
- **Transitional work agreements** – We recommend developing a formal agreement with the employee to address the details of the transitional or modified duty position. The employer determines whether to continue or terminate the plan based on the employee's progress toward full duty. CHS can provide sample agreements and help clients develop the materials.
- **Job descriptions** – Giving the physician a detailed job description can help avoid confusion over terminology and prevent incorrect assumptions as to the physical demands of the employee's job. It is helpful to maintain a description of alternative job tasks for employees who return to work early and are unable to do all of their normal, full-duty tasks.
- **Resources** – A managed care organization (MCO), third party claims administrator, medical provider and the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) can walk employers through every step in the process; it is helpful to keep their contact information handy

Return-to-work programs

For complex claims, CHS can help clients identify the additional resources needed to initiate a return-to-work program. Here are four programs to evaluate based on the details of the claim, the employee's interest and the employer's ability to accommodate job duty restrictions.

Transitional Work Services (TWS)

- Provides therapy on-site when an employee is on transitional or restricted duty
- Can be utilized in either medical only or lost time claims
- Uses the employee's functional work tasks to progress toward target job/full duty
- Employee, employer and treating physician must agree
- Incorporated case-by-case or company-wide (employee can decline)
- No additional cost; an employee on restricted duty typically receives physical therapy anyway
- Unlike clinical therapy, the therapist collaborates directly with the employer, employee, physician and MCO
- On-site therapists have the ability to identify barriers to returning to full duty quicker, facilitating proactive claims management

over

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**BRIGHT
IDEAS**



Remain at Work (RAW)

- Provides on-site field case manager *and* therapist to assist the employee in returning to full duty
- Limited to medical only claims
- Used when barriers are identified in employee's progression to full duty work
- Can be used even if the employee was participating in on-site therapy
- Used only on a case-by-case basis
- Employee and employer must agree
- MCO is responsible for identifying the feasibility criteria
- BWC is not involved in RAW and costs are not charged to the BWC's surplus fund; costs go to the medical portion of the claim and will impact the employer's risk
- May include additional services such as job analyses, job modification, on-the-job-training, tools and supplies
- Prior to implementing this program, we recommend that employers meet with their MCO and third party administrator to discuss the medical necessity, advantages vs. disadvantages, options and costs

Job Retention Services (JRS)

- Provides on-site field case manager and therapist to help the employee return to full duty
- Limited to lost time claims in which the employee has returned to work on restricted duty
- Used when barriers are identified in the employee's progression toward full duty work
- Can be used even if the employee is participating in on-site therapy
- Employee, employer and treating physician must agree

- Feasibility is established case-by-case and *not all claims are eligible*
- MCO is responsible for identifying the feasibility criteria; BWC determines eligibility
- Medical and compensation costs are charged to the BWC's surplus fund, not to the employer's risk
- Employer may qualify for wage incentives (reimbursement of a portion of paid wages)
- May include additional services such as job analyses, job modification, on-the-job training, tools and supplies to facilitate the employee's return to work

Vocational Rehabilitation (Voc Rehab)

- Provides field case management and employee works with qualified rehabilitation professional to develop specialized return-to-work plan
- Should be considered when it appears that more resources are needed to help an employee return to work
- Employee must have return-to-work goals: same job same employer, different job same employer, or different job different employer
- Employee must be medically stable to participate
- MCO is responsible for determining program feasibility (medically and otherwise); BWC determines eligibility
- Employee can receive compensation in the form of Living Maintenance
- Medical and compensation costs during the program *are not charged to the employer's risk*
- May include additional services such as job search training and assistance
- Employee, employer and treating physician must agree

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