

**MENOMINEE TRIBAL ENTERPRISES
SAFETY PROGRAM**

**RETURN TO WORK
PROGRAM**

**PART 1
RETURN TO WORK PROGRAM**

I. Purpose

To provide guidelines for establishing an effective return to work (RTW) program.

II. Program

The goal of the workers' compensation management process is to return people to productive work as soon as possible. Doing so provides significant benefits to employees and the company, such as:

- Reduced adverse effects of illness and injury for employees and their families
- Retention of experienced people
- Reduced costs associated with workers' compensation claims (i.e. indemnity payments, medical and legal costs, and the cost of hiring replacement employees.)

III. Types of Return to Work

A. Full duty

Employee returns to the regular job.

B. Transitional

Employee returns to work with restrictions as stated by the treating physician for a defined period of time (see Section IV, "Return to Work with Restrictions").

C. Job Modification

Employee returns to work at regular job that is modified to accommodate limitations resulting from the injury or illness.

D. Job reassignment

Employee returns to work at a different position within the operation that meets physical restrictions.

IV. Return to Work with Restrictions

When employees return to work with restrictions, it is necessary to assign them work that will not aggravate their conditions. To accomplish this, it is necessary to analyze all jobs and identify various types of demands placed on workers.

A. General Guidelines

1. Contact the treating physician
2. Get an understanding of the restrictions from the employee's perspective
3. Talk to the employee's supervisor and the employee together to determine if a return to regular duty is possible while still accommodating restrictions. Discuss whether the job modifications can be made with the supervisor
4. If an employee is not able to return to their regular job duties, even with modification, consider the possibility of job reassignment or help in securing a suitable job elsewhere. involve people from other departments.

B. Task Analysis

Management should make sure that a job analysis is completed before a return to work is considered for an employee. By participating in this process, the management will gain a better understanding of the job and its demands.

Videotaping a job's activities is also an effective means of communicating the job information to physicians and others.

PART 2
WORKERS COMPENSATION FOLLOW-UP COMMUNICATION

I. Purpose

To provide guidelines to establish and maintain contacts with injured employees, service providers, and other interested parties throughout the claims management process to facilitate an early return to work.

II. Follow-up Contacts

The following people need to be contacted, periodically as needed, throughout the claims management process.

- Injured employees
- Supervisors
- Physicians
- Other service providers

A. Employee Contacts

In communication with employees, the primary emphasis should be on conveying that their welfare is more important than cost aspects. It is also important to document all contacts including date, time and details.

- Confirm that benefits are being received timely.
- Inform employees if transitional duty is available.
- Ensure that they understand their rights.
- Check whether they are satisfied with their treatment.
- Ask if they have any questions.
- Emphasize the importance of regular communication and develop a mutual understanding for doing so.
- Determine if any problems or perceptions are delaying the employee's willingness to return to work.

B. Supervisor contacts

It is important for the injured employees to feel that their supervisors are interested in the employees' well-being and need them back at work as soon as possible, because they are an important part of the operation.

In some cases, supervisors may be reluctant to contact the employees. However, strong effort needs to be made to convince them to do so and may require management intervention.

Inform the supervisors of the role they can play in claims management process, including

- Weekly phone calls
- Personal visits to the hospital or home
- Inquiries about timeliness of benefits, quality of care, etc. to show concern
- Encouraging co-workers to also make contact
- Sending plants/flowers/get-well cards to the hospital or home
- Contacting family members
- Performing a task analysis
- Reminding and encouraging employee to return to any transitional duty that is medically approved

C. Physician contacts

A physician's understanding of our operation, our relationship with them and the physician's willingness to assist in the return-to-work efforts have a major impact on the claims management process.

1. The following can be done to obtain physician's understanding and cooperation:
 - Conduct a tour of the facility to make them familiar with various types of jobs and the work environment. Provide them with a list of possible transitional duty jobs, and ask them to observe related tasks being performed.
 - Establish procedures for obtaining chart notes and reports.

- Ask physicians for suggested use of special aides or tools or job modifications to facilitate the return to work.
2. In individual cases, contact must be made with the treating physician concerning the following:
- Whether the medical problem is job related or related to other causes.
 - Within 48 hours, ask the physician to forecast length of time expected for the injured worker to be away from the job.
 - See when the employee can be:
 - Sent home from the hospital
 - Returned to regular duty
 - Returned to transitional (restricted) duty
 - Returned to modified work
 - Estimate length of time for:
 - Hospitalization
 - Recovery
 - Provide information about the employee's job and ask if the employee:
 - Can return to their regular job
 - Can return temporarily to transitional duty or a modified job
 - Requires permanent reassignment to a modified or new job
 - Cannot engage in gainful employment
 - Obtain a progress report after each visit

D. Other service provider contacts

Various other service providers, such as physical therapists, vocational rehabilitation counselors, and nurses, also need to be contacted