

Workers' Rehabilitation and Return to Work

Guidelines for injured workers

When an employee is injured through work, the costs associated with the injury are covered to ensure that:

- ◆ reasonable medical treatment is received;
- ◆ financial security is maintained during the recovery period.

When a Rehabilitation Consultant is appointed, a written Recovery and Return to Work (RTW) Plan is put in place to assist workers to:

- ◆ recover from their injury or illness; and
- ◆ return to work as soon and as safely as possible.

The system enables a worker to feel valued and return to their pre-injury lifestyle as soon as possible. It also helps employers to minimise disruption to the workplace and reduce workers' compensation costs.

Everyone benefits from an effective injury management system, however, it relies on the support of everyone. This includes injury managers, supervisors, co-workers, treatment providers, and injured workers. Everyone needs to understand the system so they can play their part.

Recovery, RTW and Rehabilitation

Work related injuries can have a high cost for both workers and employers. For the injured worker, the effects can be both physical and emotional. For the employer, there is a significant financial cost (replacement staff, training, increased workers' compensation premiums) as well as disruption to the workplace and effects on morale. Early and appropriate return to work is in the best interests of both the worker and employers, as it minimises the effects of the injury.

What are the aims of RTW and Rehabilitation assistance?

The *Return to Work Act 2014 (SA)* states that the aims of rehabilitation are to ensure that workers with a compensable disability achieve the best practicable levels of physical and mental recovery and are restored to the workforce and the community.

What is RTW and rehabilitation assistance?

RTW and Rehabilitation assistance is for those workers with a work injury who may have difficulty remaining at work or returning to normal work duties. At the initial meeting, rights and responsibilities are explained and an initial Recovery and Return to Work Plan is developed.

What is in a Recovery and Return to Work Plan?

The Recovery and Return to Work Plan is an agreement between the injured worker, the RTW Co-ordinator and/or the Rehabilitation Consultant and the employer about what will be done to assist the worker to return to work. The Plan is developed in consultation with the worker and other parties involved. It is documented, signed and copies are provided to all parties.

The plan has various stage reviews and is reviewed regularly. It may include details of medical treatment, the current status of the injury, actions to be undertaken and by whom, and when the plan will be reviewed.

The plan will also include details of the worker's usual job and details of alternate duties or alterations that can be made to make it suitable. If a worker is unable to do his or her normal work but is able to do some form of work, the plan may include a gradual return to normal work through a series of steps, progressively increasing the time worked and/or the types of work performed.

Workers' Rights

Injured workers have rights to:

- ◆ Choose medical treatment providers
- ◆ Be meaningfully involved in all decisions relating to their recovery, return to work and rehabilitation
- ◆ Be provided with an appropriate rehabilitation provider, and to request a change of rehabilitation provider where their intervention is considered unsatisfactory
- ◆ Be provided with a current copy of their Recovery and Return to Work Plan
- ◆ Have any personal information kept confidential
- ◆ Seek independent advice before signing any document and be provided with full interpreting service at any time if required
- ◆ Have a representative of their choice at any meeting regarding their rehabilitation, eg. spouse, Health & Safety Representative, Union representative or co-worker
- ◆ Not to be disadvantaged by their ethnic origin or background.

Responsibilities of all Parties

Employers have a responsibility to:

- ◆ Be actively involved in, support and facilitate recovery and return to work
- ◆ Provide safe and suitable duties
- ◆ Provide suitable employment options to an injured worker when required
- ◆ Ensure that workers do not perform duties that are outside medical restrictions
- ◆ Ensure that workers are not disadvantaged in their employment as a result of a work injury.

All employees have a responsibility to:

- ◆ Report any injuries or hazards immediately
- ◆ Understand the Return to Work scheme
- ◆ Support and encourage injured workers to help with their recovery.

Injured workers have a responsibility to:

- ◆ Co-operate with treatment (other than the reasonable refusal of surgery or medication)
- ◆ Actively participate in the recovery and RTW process, including meetings with the Rehabilitation Consultant to prepare the plan
- ◆ Comply with the requirements of the plan
- ◆ Undertake suitable duties as certified by their doctor
- ◆ Ensure any activities at work or at home are performed within medical restrictions.

Rehabilitation Providers have a responsibility to:

- ◆ Co-ordinate the services necessary for an injured workers recovery and return to work
- ◆ Explain the Return to Work scheme principles with key stakeholders when required
- ◆ Discuss rights, responsibilities and entitlements
- ◆ Liaise with medical treatment providers, the employer, and Union (if requested) to ensure good communication and co-ordination of services
- ◆ Develop written and up to date Recovery and Return to Work Plans with injured workers, treating doctor and the employer, and provide copies of the plans to all parties

- ◆ Provide support and assistance during the return to work process and negotiate alternative duties with the employer
- ◆ Assist with vocational assessments, retraining and/or job seeking if needed
- ◆ Maintain professional standards and keep personal information confidential unless authorised in writing to disclose information to other parties.

CCI is responsible for:

- ◆ Ensuring that workers are informed about workers' compensation in their preferred language and/or to be provided with an interpreting service at any time if required.
- ◆ Prompt claims management
- ◆ Assessing recovery, RTW and rehabilitation needs as soon as possible
- ◆ Supporting recovery, RTW and rehabilitation.

What if there are disagreements?

For recovery, RTW and rehabilitation to be successful, everyone involved must be committed to the process. If there are disagreements, it is important to resolve them as soon as possible. The dispute resolution procedures are explained in the Knowing your Rights brochure that has already been provided to you by your Case Manager.

Toll Free 1 300 1 10 442
www.ccinsurance.org.au

Catholic Church Insurance Limited
GPO Box 307, Northbridge WA 6865
workerscompensation@ccinsurance.org.au

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