



SUPERVISOR GUIDE

EARLY RETURN TO WORK

ERTW BENEFITS

Experience shows that injured workers recover faster when they return to work. The longer an injured worker remains away from work, the more difficult it is to return to gainful employment. Returning to regular work occurs more quickly with transitional or modified duty available to the injured employee. Companies with ERTW experience up to 20% to 40% savings in workers' compensation costs.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

1. Commitment

Commitment and support from top management are keys to establishing an effective ERTW program. The program will be more successful when managers, supervisors, and workers clearly understand the program and work together.

2. Preparation

Identify and involve key employees early and provide necessary guidance. Establish goals and policies along with appropriate forms and letters.

3. Training

Management, supervisors, and employees will benefit from training that shows how this program works.

4. Communication

Carefully developed policies and procedures relating to Early Return to Work and make them public throughout the organization. Maintain communication with injured workers, supervisors, and medical care providers throughout the recovery process.

STEPS TO IMPLEMENTING EARLY RETURN TO WORK

1. Develop Clear Goals and Policies

Decide what outcomes are expected and steps to take. Factors to consider include existing company policies, collective bargaining agreements (if any), and the corporate culture of the organization.

Identify employees who may be medically eligible to take part in the program. Consider alternative positions or accommodations for those whose injuries will result in temporary or permanent impairment. Indicate that modified duty assignments will be consistent with medical guidelines. Clarify time limits on transitional assignments. Specify that when such work is available, participation is mandatory.

Once goals and policies are in place, develop a written policy and procedures. See ClearPath Mutual's Back In The Game program at www.Clearpathmutual.com.

2. Designate a Program Coordinator

For best results, designate an individual, such as a safety manager or human resources representative, to take the lead role in implementing the Early Return to Work program. This helps ensure consistent administration and accountability. Define the coordinator's responsibilities, which may include:

- Communicate program information to supervisors and workers.
- Monitor the recovery status of injured workers.
- Manage correspondence from injured workers, medical providers, and ClearPath Mutual.
- Work with supervisors to ensure that consistent and appropriate communication with injured workers is ongoing and documented.

3. Identify Transitional Duty

In preparation for accommodating injured workers who cannot perform their usual jobs, identify transitional assignments. An important first step is performing job analyses on the various positions in your organization. Identify the actual demands and essential elements of each position. Use this for developing individual modified assignments. The key is to find ways to make use of the worker's skills and knowledge, rather than "make-work" assignments.

Creativity in developing modified assignments enables the employee to be productive while meeting medical guidelines. Consider the following:

- Part-time employment
- Temporary jobs
- Alternative tasks
- Job sharing
- Jobs in other departments
- Job modification
- Transitioning through different jobs

Look at each situation individually. It is common for a returning worker to be able to handle all but one or two aspects of the job. In such cases, it often makes sense to explore job restructuring. This involves arranging for a co-worker to take on those aspects of the job that the recovering worker cannot perform.





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In return, the recovering worker takes on some of the tasks typically done by the co-worker. This may include jobs combining tasks from several workers.

4. Develop Standard Forms

Sample forms/templates are available at www.Clearpathmutual.com. Using these standard forms and letters ensures consistency and helps supervisors gather and communicate essential information. Forms needed:

- Early Return to Work Policy Statement
- Notice to ClearPath Mutual of a Potential Case for Early Return to Work
- Doctor Notification Letter informs the treating doctor of the organization's Early Return to Work policy.
- Job Analysis Form detailing the physical capacities needed for the position.
- Return to Work Physical Capacities Form is for the doctor to complete, detailing the worker's physical capabilities.
- Return to Work Availability Letter informs the injured worker of the position assignment.
- Temporary Modified Duty Assignment Form detailing the modified duties as assigned by supervisor and accepted by employee.

5. Provide Training

Train supervisory staff in the principles and procedures of the Early Return to Work. Training topics should include:

- Accident reporting and investigation
- Need for early and ongoing communication
- Methods of documentation
- Job modifications and alternative assignments

6. Maintain Communications

Supervisors should regularly reach out to injured workers during recovery to demonstrate concern for the injured worker and desire for getting him/her back to work. This enhances

morale by valuing both the contributions of injured workers and affected co-workers. Maintain contact with medical teams as well, informing them of the company policy and practice regarding ERTW.

HOW TO USE THE ERTW FORMS

Early Return To Work Policy Statement - This serves notice and explains your ERTW policy to employees. We recommend presenting this to new employees upon orientation and redistributing this on a regular basis to all employees. Employees should know what to expect if injured on the job, and that their healthy recovery is a top priority that involves them, their doctors, and their supervisors.

Notice to ClearPath Mutual of an ERTW Case - This alerts ClearPath Mutual that you have identified an injured employee as a possible participant in your ERTW program.

Doctor Notification Letter - This advises the doctor of your company's ERTW program, directs the physician's attention to information about the employee's job demands, and asks the doctor to fill in, sign, and return information concerning the employee's physical capabilities. Provide this letter to the injured worker to give to the physician or send directly to the physician. Copy ClearPath Mutual after the doctor completes the form.

Job Demands Analysis - Employer completes this form and accompanies the Doctor Notification Letter. It summarizes the employee's current job duties and physical requirements. You can use this form to identify transitional duty throughout your company and present the doctor with a transitional position for your employee. Send copy to ClearPath Mutual.

Physical Capabilities Worksheet - This form accompanies the Doctor Notification Letter. The doctor completes this upon examination of the injured worker. Provide this to the employee to start the ERTW process. Send it to the treating physician on a regular basis to address work restrictions at each examination. **Copy ClearPath Mutual after the doctor completes the form.**

Return To Work Availability Letter - Send to the injured worker by certified mail as a documented offer of a transitional duty position. Keep a copy in the employees file and send a copy sent to ClearPath Mutual. This letter is an important document if the employee refuses transitional employment.



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