

2010

**WCB facts**

Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba

## RETURN TO WORK

### What is a Return to Work (RTW) program?

Preventing workplace injuries is the most effective way to protect workers and control an employer's workers compensation costs. An effective RTW program is the best way to minimize the impact of an injury, promote recovery and manage associated costs. A goal of the WCB is to reduce the impact of injuries by helping the worker return to work. This is best achieved by returning the worker to the same job with the same employer. Most of the time, the worker and the employer make their own arrangements.

RTW programs are a proactive approach to helping injured workers return to safe and productive employment as soon as health permits following a workplace injury. The goal is to optimize recovery, facilitate safe and timely return to work, and to prevent other injuries. RTW programs can include modified work, gradual return to work, or alternate work.

Each workplace and each worker is unique, each have specific needs and a variety of interdependent factors. Key RTW principles are participation, meaningful and safe work, communication, and proactive early intervention to help ensure RTW programs are a success. RTW programs are developed in workplaces and should be tailored to meet the needs of the workplace and injured workers. WCB is available to support the RTW process, and to become involved if there is a dispute regarding RTW issues, or a worker or employer require financial or technical supports for the RTW to be successful.

This publication is provided for general information. For more specific information, see *The Workers Compensation Act of Manitoba and Regulations*, available through Statutory Publications by calling (204)-945-3101. WCB Policies are available by calling (204)-954-4655. This information can also be obtained from the WCB's website at [www.wcb.mb.ca](http://www.wcb.mb.ca).

**Why have a RTW program?**

A timely and safe return to work can help injured workers recovery more quickly. There are financial, legal, and moral reasons to have RTW programs in place to assist workers with recovery following an injury. Workplace injuries and illnesses are costly. RTW programs benefit workers, employers, unions, and the Worker Compensation Board.

**Who is involved in a RTW program?**

A team approach to a RTW program works best. The team generally includes the worker, employer, healthcare provider and, when required, the WCB. Other individuals may be involved when requested by a worker such as their union representative or other representative and other disability management professionals. Employers should be proactive and have a RTW program developed in the case a worker is injured.

## **What are the benefits of a RTW program?**

### **Benefits for Workers**

- Assists with the recovery following an injury and allows workers to return to their normal activities both at work and at home
- Reduces the financial uncertainty that is often caused by being away from the workplace
- Once workers are back on the employer's payroll they are able to earn their regular salary and continue to accrue vacation and make contributions to EI, CPP, and other private insurance plans provided by their workplace
- Keeping workers involved in the workplace maintains relationships with co-workers and helps keep work skills up to date
- Helps maintain psychosocial wellbeing
- Reduces the impact an injury has on a worker, their family, and the community

### **Benefits to Employers**

- Retain valued and experienced employees
- Reduce costs associated with training and recruiting replacement staff
- Helps maintain productivity and team dynamics
- Reduces the costs of injuries and WCB premiums
- Helps employers meet legal requirements related to Human Rights and WCB legislation
- Improves workplace morale

### **Benefits for Unions**

- Preserves jobs and seniority
- Reduces the impact a workplace injury has on a union member
- Once workers are back on company payroll they resume financial contributions to the union

- Preserves contributions to company benefit and pension plans for union members
- Union involvement protects the workers interests and well-being
- Promotes cooperative labour-management relationships
- Allows unions to meet legal requirements related to Human Rights and WCB legislation

### **Benefits for Healthcare Providers**

- Workers recover more rapidly and completely
- Provides a holistic intervention
- Adds a treatment option
- Increases opportunity for a coordinated approach

### **What is the Role of the Worker in a RTW program?**

- Participate with your healthcare provider, employer and the WCB to develop your RTW plan
- Follow your treatment plan developed by your healthcare professional and attend all healthcare appointments
- Keep in touch with your employer while disabled from the workplace as well as throughout your RTW plan
- Keep the WCB informed of your progress and RTW date
- If you are having difficulties or increased symptoms related to your injury and RTW program it is important that you seek treatment, report difficulties to your employer, and involve the WCB

### **What is the Role of the Employer in a RTW program?**

- Offer workers meaningful and productive modified or alternate duties that are safe and within their capabilities
- Communicate to employees that you have a RTW program and the processes employees are expected to follow should they or their co-workers have to utilize the RTW program

- Communicate with injured workers throughout the recovery process to show that they are valued and help workers retain a connection to the workplace
- Ensure that supervisors and co-workers support injured workers during recovery and participation in the RTW process
- Employers should be flexible so that the RTW program can be tailored and adjusted to meet the individual needs of the worker and their recovery; there should be on going communication throughout the RTW process

**What is the Role of the Healthcare Professional in a RTW program?**

- Diagnose and treat the illness or injury
- Advise and support the injured worker
- Complete WCB reports and send them directly to the WCB
- Communicate a worker's capabilities with the worker and the employer
- Work with other involved healthcare professionals to facilitate the injured worker's recovery and safe return to work

**What is the role of the WCB?**

- Become involved when there is a dispute about a worker's capabilities or the work they are being asked to perform
- Provide assistance if the worker or employer requires financial or technical support to help the worker RTW
- Monitor RTW and assist with wage loss payments