



RETURN TO WORK

What is a Return to Work (RTW) program?

A Return to Work (RTW) program is a company's policy or method to help reduce the impact of a workplace injury. It is based on the philosophy that many employees can perform meaningful and safe work as part of their recovery process. Ideally a RTW program will be developed cooperatively with workers, their union (when applicable), the employer, and when required, the WCB.

Having a well developed RTW program in a workplace is a proactive approach to helping injured workers stay at work or 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 further injuries. RTW strategies and policies should be in place prior to workplace injuries occurring.

Preventing workplace injuries is the most effective way to protect workers and control an employer's workers compensation costs. When injuries do occur, an effective RTW program is the best way to minimize the impact of an injury, promote recovery, and manage associated costs.

Each workplace and worker is unique. Therefore, RTW programs must evolve and be customized to meet the specific needs of individual workers and workplaces. Key principles based on participation, communication, responsibility, and proactive early intervention will help ensure your program will be a success.

The WCB offers a one day workshop for employers wanting to enhance or develop a RTW program. For more information or assistance with completing your registration, please contact us at employerrelationships@wcb.mb.ca or call 1-855-954-4321, extension 4662.

Why have a RTW program?

A timely and safe RTW program can help injured workers recover more quickly. There are financial, legal, and moral reasons to have RTW programs in place to assist workers with recovery following an injury. RTW programs benefit workers, employers, unions, and healthcare providers.

Who is involved in a RTW program?

A team approach to a RTW program works best. The team generally includes the worker, employer and may also include a union representative or other worker representative.



What are the benefits of a RTW program?

Benefits for Workers

- Helps you recover following an injury and assists with return to normal activities both at work and at home
- Keeps you involved in the workplace, helps you maintain relationships with co-workers and helps to keep your work skills up to date
- Helps you maintain psycho-social well being
- Reduces the impact an injury has on you, your family, and the community
- Reduces financial uncertainty that is often caused by being away from the workplace
- Once back on your employer's payroll, you are able to earn your regular salary and continue to accrue vacation time and make contributions to EI, CPP, company pension and other private insurance plans provided by your workplace

Benefits to Employers

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

Benefits for Unions

- Preserves jobs and seniority
- Reduces the impact a workplace injury has on a union member
- Union involvement protects workers' interests and well-being
- Promotes co-operative labour-management relationships
- 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
- Allows unions to meet legal requirements related to Human Rights and WCB legislation



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

- Participate with your healthcare provider, employer and the WCB to develop your individual RTW plan
- Follow your treatment plan developed by your healthcare professional and attend all healthcare appointments
- Keep in touch with your employer regularly while unable to work as well as throughout your RTW plan
- Keep the WCB informed of your progress and RTW date
- Work within your capabilities while in a RTW program
- If you are having difficulties or increased symptoms related to your injury and RTW program, seek treatment, report difficulties to your employer, and involve the WCB

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

- Communicate to workers that the workplace has a RTW program and what processes they should follow if they need to use the program
- Offer workers meaningful and productive modified or alternate duties that are safe and within their capabilities
- Be flexible so the RTW program can be tailored and adjusted to meet the individual needs of the worker and their recovery. There should be ongoing communication throughout the RTW process
- Communicate with injured workers throughout the recovery process to confirm that they are valued and help them retain a connection to the workplace
- Ensure that supervisors and co-workers support injured workers during recovery and participation in the RTW process

What is the Role of the Union in a RTW program?

- Participate in developing the workplace's RTW program and it's ongoing evolution
- Participate in developing individual RTW plans
- Educate members on RTW obligations and responsibilities
- Represent workers who are experiencing challenges

What is the Role of the WCB?

- Help address barriers to RTW and provide assistance if the worker or employer requires financial or technical support to help the worker RTW
- Become involved when there is a dispute about a worker's capabilities or the work they are being asked to perform



- In certain cases facilitate and attend RTW meetings as part of the RTW team
- Support the worker in their transition back into the workplace if required
- Monitor RTW and assist with wage loss payments
- Become involved where concerns are raised regarding RTW practices
- Help train employers in developing RTW programs
- Determine if the employer has met re-employment obligations

This publication is provided for general information. It is not intended to be legal advice, and should not be relied on as such. For more specific information, see *The Workers Compensation Act and Regulations and WCB Policies*. These documents are available on the WCB website at wcb.mb.ca.