

## **Alabama Guide to Cost Containment and Transitional Modified Return to Work**

### **A Return to Work Resource for Employers**

Early return to work following an injury can reduce the costs associated with Workers Compensation claims and provide an enhanced employee working relationship with their employer.

### **Written Policy and Procedures**

When developing a Transitional Return to Work program, the focus should be on keeping it simple, realistic and suitable to your business needs. The best way to accomplish this is to put the policy and procedures in writing. The policy statement can include statements that confirm the company's commitment to transitional early return to work; explain the company's transitional return to work philosophy; and stress the importance of safe operations and safety prevention. Procedures can be written to identify roles and responsibilities such as the primary contact person and contact information.

### **Employee Communication**

Educate your employees by informing them of your Return to Work Program. Let employees know, and confirm that they understand, that they have an obligation to keep you informed of medical restrictions resulting from an injury and that you will make every effort to accommodate the restrictions and create a transitional modified duty opportunity. Emphasize that all employees will be treated in the same manner. Provide the injured employee with an Injury Return to Work Slip to be completed by the treating physician and returned to you.

### **Job Task Analysis**

Document the job duties and physical requirements of every position within your company. The job Task Analysis process allows job requirements to be matched with physical capabilities. The Work Capacity side of this form should be completed by the treating physician. This form should accompany injured workers on their initial medical visit to serve as a means of communicating the job description to the physician. The physician can document the employee's work capacity on the right side. Furthermore, this information may be sufficient to help the physician return the injured worker to their regular duty assignment. If the employee is unable to return to their regular job, you can compare the Work Capacity side, completed by the physician, to your existing list of available light duty jobs to determine if you can accommodate the injured employee. This form can be used as a means of resolving discrepancies between the employees' description of their job duties, and the actual physical requirements of specific jobs.

### **Identify Potential Transitional Light Duty Jobs**

To facilitate an Early Return to Work Program using transitional modified work roles, it would be helpful to have your managers and supervisors complete a Modified Duty Job

Identification form, identifying potential light duty tasks within your organization. Furthermore, you could catalog job descriptions with explanations of duties/physical requirements and salaries. Photographs are also helpful in the effort to communicate a job description to the physician. You could reference the Transitional modified work description to determine whether the worker can be brought back to either limited, restricted duty or another position. After you review the Physician's Report of Work Capacity, you can compare this to your list of available light duty jobs. If you have a position the employee can fill, coordinate with the assigned adjuster to commence the transitional RTW process.

Here are some examples of potential modified duty or alternate work assignments:

- Answering telephones
- Cleaning/dusting/polishing/washing furniture, equipment, windowsills, etc.
- Cooking
- Data entry or other computer work
- Dispatching
- Emptying wastebaskets
- Filing paperwork
- Handling sales
- Inventory control
- Logging shipments
- Making deliveries, internal and external
- Painting
- Performing light maintenance
- Recordkeeping
- Restocking supplies
- Shredding paper
- Sorting and distributing mail
- Stocking restrooms
- Stuffing envelopes
- Typing
- Updating mailing lists
- Vacuuming/sweeping floors
- Operating cash register

## **Accident Reporting**

**REPORT ACCIDENTS PROMPTLY!** According to a study by a national insurance carrier, long delays by employers in reporting on-the-job injuries to insurers can increase Workers Compensation claim costs by 48%. In an effort to "hold the line" against rising Workers Compensation costs, Berkley Southeast Insurance Group makes available a first report of injury program designed to simplify claims reporting. Reports can be made twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. Don't delay a loss report trying to collect additional information. The assigned adjuster will follow up for any

information needed but not included during the initial loss report. Refer to the claim reporting procedures document contained in this kit for reporting methods.

### **Corrective Action**

Following an occupational accident, take immediate precautions to prevent further injury. A medical determination of the employee's capabilities and restrictions is essential to avoid additional injury to your worker or others. It is important to investigate the accident to determine if the job needs to be re-engineered to prevent accident reoccurrence.

### **Communication**

Communication is the key to a successful Return to Work Program using transitional modified roles. Healthcare providers are required to give employers and claim handlers a written post injury report outlining the employee's specific restrictions, where applicable. Frequent communication with the healthcare providers will keep everyone informed of the nature of the injury and progress of recovery. It will also serve to keep the healthcare providers aware of regular work requirements and the availability of light duty assignments. Communicate with the healthcare providers by sending the Job Task Analysis and Physician's Report of Work Capacity forms with the employee or through phone contact.