

Return to Work Program

General Guidelines for Facilities and Operations

August 1, 2012

Overview

A Return to Work (RTW) program is now underway in all Facilities and Operations (F&O) units. The program is designed to provide an integrated, supportive, and coordinated approach to help employees safely return to work following illness or injury. A partnership between WorkConnections and University Human Resources, the RTW program aims to locate transitional work for employees who have been absent from work due to either a work-related injury or non-work-related health issue, and have been released to return to work with physical restrictions. Early return to work can be an important part of the recovery process. Staff members' contributions in their transitional assignments are important both for the staff member's health and well-being and for the university.

Program Goals

The Return to Work program is designed to:

- Help staff members recover faster by getting back to work gradually or back to work sooner in a position that can accommodate their medical restrictions during the recovery period
- Reduce lost productivity costs
- Reduce lost work days
- Maintain staffing levels

Benefits to Staff

- Enhances psychological and physical recovery
- Encourages employee to be a productive contributor to university
- Preserves employee paid time off/vacation banks
- Helps to develop new skills
- Maintains income stream

Procedures and Placement Approach for Transitional Assignments

Whenever feasible, the employee's supervisor will make it a priority to modify the employee's position so that the staff member can return to the same department and same job during the period in which restrictions are in place. In cases where a return to the same job is not possible, the supervisor will make every attempt to locate alternate work within the department. Via phone, email, or in person, a supervisor may:

- Contact the WorkConnections claims representative for clarification on restrictions
- Talk with other supervisors or the department manager/foreman about available project work
- Contact the Return to Work coordinator to determine if transitional work in the larger department can be identified

If no work is available within the department, the RTW program coordinator will consult with the program planning team members to identify alternate work in another F&O unit.

Employees are expected to report for transitional assignments, and decision makers are expected to consider employees with restrictions for transitional work when the minimum qualifications are met.

Transitional work situations outside of the home department will be evaluated by the RTW program coordinator every two weeks or when requested by the alternate department.

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Transitional Assignment Parameters

- Transitional work in the home department normally will not exceed 90 calendar days.
- The length of transitional assignments in alternate departments will be determined by the work available and normally will not exceed 90 days.
- A transitional assignment exceeding 90 calendar days will be on an exception basis only.
- All alternate assignments will be carefully considered according to restrictions, skills and Department of Occupational Safety and Environmental Health (OSEH) regulations.

Alternate Regular Employment Parameters

In cases where the employee has long-term restrictions that will prohibit a transition back to the regular job, even with a reasonable accommodation, the supervisor will make every attempt to locate alternate regular work within the department.

If alternate regular employment is not available in the home department, the RTW program coordinator, when appropriate, may work with the employee and RTW planning teams to identify employment options in other areas of F&O and in other university departments. The employee is expected to take an active role in seeking alternate regular employment.

Transitional and Alternate Regular Employment Parameters

- Once in a transitional or alternate regular employment position, the employee will adhere to restrictions while at the work site.
- If the alternate transitional work is on a different shift, Human Resources will be consulted to ensure that proper notice of shift change is provided.
- Human Resources will be consulted to determine appropriate pay rates in alternate assignments.

Communication for Transitional Assignment in an Alternate Department

RTW coordinator

- Communicate with the home department, potential alternate departments, the RTW planning teams, and the employee to secure transitional work when possible
- Communicate with unit/staff HR to ensure compliance with bargaining agreements
- Communicate with OSEH to ensure compliance with safety issues when applicable
- Send RTW plan via email to the home department, alternate department, human resources, WorkConnections, Payroll, and the employee
- Follow up with alternate department every 2 weeks, when new medical information is received by WorkConnections, or at the request of the department

Administrative Supervisor (home department)

- Confirm transitional work RTW date with employee
- Ensure correct payroll coding for transitional work if not covered by home department
- Communicate with functional supervisor as needed
- Handle discipline or performance issues that arise during the transitional assignment with input from the functional supervisor and HR

Functional Supervisor (alternate department)

- Confirm hours worked with administrative supervisor daily during assignment
- Communicate with administrative supervisor on other issues as needed
- Notify RTW program coordinator of any issues with the assignment