

SAFETY GROUP PROGRAM MONTHLY ARTICLE

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*Editor's Note: Safety Group Program Monthly Newsletter Article – July 2014
Contact: Mindy Carrothers (303.361.4790, mindy.carrothers@pinnacol.com)*

Building a Successful Return-to-Work Program

You have the power to control your workers' compensation costs. Injury prevention is the best approach, but if a workplace accident does occur, claims management is key, starting with a return-to-work program. The return-to-work program is a proactive plan to help injured workers start working again during their recovery, either at their regular positions or in a modified duty position.

Injured Worker and Employer Benefits

Getting back to work is an important part of the healing process for the injured worker. Getting back to work allows an injured worker to stay connected at work, regain financial security and feel productive again. For employers, a return-to-work program can speed your injured workers' medical recovery, reduce claims costs and keep your workers' compensation premiums down.

Components of a Return to Work Program

There are four components of a return-to-work program. Your program should include a return-to-work policy, a designated coordinator and specific modified duty tasks. You should also establish a modified duty job offer process.

Return-to-Work Policy

A written return-to-work policy lets your employees know what your organization will do if a work related injury occurs. Your return-to-work policy should be tailored to your organization. It should consist of the following elements:

- Clearly state the purpose of your policy
- Designate a modified duty coordinator
- Outline the responsibilities of the designated coordinator
- Identify your designated medical providers

Make sure your policy is signed by management and shared with existing and new employees. Once you implement a policy, it is important that you enforce it consistently. You should also share your policy with your designated medical providers. This informs your providers that you have a policy and preplanned tasks, and it will also help expedite the return-to-work process.

Modified Duty Task List

Sometimes injured workers can perform some, but not all, of their regular job tasks. This is called modified duty. Before an injury ever occurs, you should create modified duty task lists for your employees. This advance preparation will help you bring an injured worker back to work quickly. Creating the task lists should be a collaborative effort among supervisors, lead employees and management. With these ideas in mind, you can write a formal modified duty task list. Check out our variety of [sample modified duty task lists](#) for ideas.

The Formal Modified Duty Job Offer Process

There are two ways to offer modified duty work:

- Verbal (informal) modified duty job offer
- Written (formal) modified duty job offer

To follow the informal process, simply verbally inform the injured worker of the terms of the modified duty work, including the tasks, hours and rate of pay. If the injured worker accepts the offer, notify Pinnacol immediately so we won't pay lost wage benefits to the injured worker that will add to your claim costs. A formal job offer is made when the injured worker refuses to return to work following a verbal job offer.

The formal modified duty offer process requires specific steps, including:

- Writing a letter to the injured workers' medical provider requesting approval of the modified duty work tasks
- Extending a formal modified duty offer letter to your injured worker

Attempting to create a return-to-work program after an injury is both stressful and time-consuming. Let Pinnacol's return-to-work consultants assist you, so you're prepared before an injury occurs. We can help you get employees back to work quickly and safely, while allowing you to manage your claims more effectively.

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