



Policy No. 6.022

Northwest Louisiana Technical Community College

Transitional Return to Work

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The health and well-being of all employees is of great importance to Northwest Louisiana Technical Community College (NLTC). It is well documented that injuries affect the whole person and that effective rehabilitation and treatment includes keeping physically and mentally active within the restrictions of the particular injury. NLTC will make every effort to help employees maximize their healing and facilitate their early return to work.

NLTC has implemented a Transitional Return to Work Plan effective January 2015. The plan is an update to the former Worker's Compensation Early Return to Work effective since 2008. A transitional return to work is employment which allows injured workers to return to work at the college where they were injured for up to one year, within the physical restrictions determined by their physician, until they are capable of returning to full duty. This includes employees who are currently receiving workers' compensation benefits.

The return to work policy is economically beneficial to NLTC, the state of Louisiana, and employees in regaining the economic, health, and emotional benefits of full employment.

Scope and Applicability

The policy applies to all employees who are eligible to receive workers' compensation benefits.

Goals of the Transitional Return to Work

Injured workers should be returned to gainful employment as soon as medically possible after a job-related injury or illness.

Implementation Plan

A successful transitional return-to-work plan shall be based on medical prognosis and recovery. Transitional work shall be available **until an employee is able to resume full duty employment or up to one year**. Unforeseen medical issues shall be referred to the ORM's third party administrator's (TPA) vocational rehabilitation counselor.

Plan Implementation

- Review the Return to Work program with existing employees annually
- Review the Return to Work program with all new hires during the new hire orientation

Reporting a Work Related Accident/ Illness

Once an injury/illness is reported by an employee the College will:

- Report work related injuries or illnesses immediately via the TPA's claims system
- Provide employee with a Functional Capability form to provide to the treating physician
- Refer the injured employee to the occupational medical clinic chosen for the agency
- Allow the injured employee to seek treatment with a physician of choice

Transitional Return to Work Team

The college shall have a transition return to work team to review all lost time workers' compensation employees under its authority.

Team scope

- Complete transitional return to work plans
- Review of job modifications
- Job tasking
- Task identification
- Comply with the state's requirement for a transitional return to work plan
- Oversight of plans
- Facilitate success of plans
- Report transitional return to work programs results

Team Composition

- Human resources representative
- Immediate supervisor
- Safety personnel
- Management representatives
- TPA staff
- RTW Coordinator
- Vocational Rehab Counselor as needed

Return to Work Coordinator

The designated RTW coordinator is the Director of Human Resources. The RTW coordinator is the primary contact for employees and outside agencies on matters related to disability management and return to work planning. This includes but is not limited to:

- Responsible for the overall coordination and day-to-day administration of the disability management program
- Develop, facilitate and monitor return to work program
- Develop and facilitate accommodations
- Work with the employee and the employer to facilitate RTW programs
- Monitor RTW plan and provide progress reports to appropriate individuals

Frequency of Team Meetings

The Transitional Return to Work team shall meet bi-weekly or monthly or when an employee is injured and/or there is a change in the injured employee's medical status based on the following:

- Size of the agency
- Number of lost time claims

Team meetings are not necessary if there are no active lost time claims.

Job Tasking

Job tasking is the process of detailing each specific job task performed in a position.

- Job tasking should be done before the accident occurs or once an injury has occurred that leads to lost time.
- Complete job tasking for each position of injury that results in lost time
- Consult with first-line supervisors
- There is no need for repetition of job tasking with each new occurrence
- Compile a master list of transitional tasks for each position
- Maintain a file of job tasks for each position for which a lost-time claim has occurred

Accommodation Types

Modification of job tasks, equipment or schedules for up to one year, or when injured worker has been released to return to work, to assist an injured worker transition to return to work. Accommodations may include, but are not limited to:

- Modified Work- Includes modification to the job tasks, functions, hours of work, frequency of breaks, worksite, or any combination of these.
- Alternate Work- Different from the employee's pre-injury job or illness offered to a worker who is temporarily or permanently unable to perform their pre-injury work.
- Transitional Work- A group of tasks or specific jobs that can be performed until the worker is capable of returning to full pre-injury duties

Transitional Return to Work

A transitional return to work plan should be completed with the supervisor of the injured employee and a representative from the return-to-work team to include:

- Specific job tasks identified
- Hours to be worked
- Duty assignment
- Physical restrictions
- The plan shall be reviewed and approved by each member of the team

Eligibility for Return to Work

When reviewing an individual worker's eligibility for return to work options, the following criteria should be followed:

- Assess the job task of the worker's pre-injury position.
- Identify transitional tasks that can be performed with the employee's current physical restrictions.
- Review other services or tasks that can be performed which would improve the overall function of the agency.

- Review tasks that can be performed that would return an employee to gainful employment.
- The Office of Risk Management's TPA will be available to identify transitional return to work tasks if needed.

Before the Return to Work

- The agency will hold a return to work meeting with the employee to review the plan before the employee returns to work.
- Once the meeting has taken place, an offer of transitional duty employment shall be made to the injured employee in writing.
- If the injured employee is represented by counsel, the notice shall be sent to the employee via counsel.

College Responsibility

- Provide a good detailed job description that includes the physical demands and essential functions of the job
- Treat the injured worker with dignity and respect
- Reflect the State values and guiding principles- create a positive atmosphere where the employee knows they are valued.
- Promote an open, cooperative process including maintaining regular contact with the employee
- Work with the RTW Coordinator to develop suitable RTW plan for the employee and stay within the obtained abilities/limitations
- Monitor the progress of the employee through the RTW plan and involve the RTW Coordinator if there are any changes in circumstances
- Promote and enforce safe work practices
- Visibly support the RTW program
- Ensure a work environment that is conducive for a successful RTW program

The Return to Work Offer

- The offer of transitional return to work employment shall include the following:
- Offer must be made in writing,
- Certified mail return receipt request or electronic mail,
- A specific return to work date and time,
- Duty assignment,
- Who to report to,
- The employing agency shall provide transitional employment for up to **one year** or until that employee has reached maximum medical improvement whereby he can return to his previous job, whichever is **less**.

Employee Responsibility

- Return the Physicians Modified Information sheet to the immediate supervisor within 24 hours of receipt of the signed form from the treating physician.
- Accept the transitional return to work offer.
- Report to work as requested in the return to work offer letter.
- Work within the restrictions provided by the physician.
- Comply with medical treatment and keep all scheduled medical appointments.

- Advise the immediate supervisor and ORM’s TPA RTW Coordinator if the transitional work is physically too difficult.

After the Employee Has Returned to Work

The agency shall not require the employee to perform tasks that have been prohibited by the treating physician when the employee returns to work on a transitional return to work plan.

- Evaluate the plan every 30 days to assess the employee’s ability to return to full duty.
- The Office of Risk Management’s TPA will be responsible for communications with medical personnel.

Termination of Employment

An agency should notify the ORM TPA if a person is at risk of termination due to exhaustion of sick leave. Agencies should:

- Maintain documentation of failed transitional return to work employment.
- Maintain documentation of efforts made to identify transitional return to work tasks.
- Maintain documentation of barriers in identifying transitional return to work.
- Documentation shall include evidence that transitional return to work tasks could not be identified, if applicable.
- Notify the RTW Coordinator for the ORM TPA when an injured worker is removed from work or the accommodations are no longer available.

Policy Reference: R.S. 39:1547
Louisiana Technical College Procedure No. HR1930.598
Senate Concurrent Resolution 50 of the 1997 Regular Legislative Session
Senate Bill 689 of the 1999 Regular Legislative Session Office of Risk
Management
Civil Service Rules Return-to-Work Policy for Employees on Worker’s
Compensation

Approved:

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