

WHAT IS AN INJURY MANAGEMENT/RTW (RETURN-TO-WORK) SYSTEM?

An injury management/RTW (return-to-work) system is a proactive way for employers to help injured workers stay at work or return to productive and safe work as soon as physically possible. This system is based on the philosophy that many injured workers can safely perform productive work during the process of recovery.

What is the procedure followed in an injury management/RTW system?

Effective injury management/RTW systems are initiated from the time first aid is administered. First aid can assess the worker to determine if the worker is able to stay at work performing normal or modified duties while the injury heals. If time away from work is required, the injury management/RTW program can reintegrate the injured worker into the workforce at a much earlier time than has historically been experienced.

What are the components of an effective health and safety management system?



Injury Management/Return-to-Work Policy, Management and Leadership

An effective injury management/return-to-work program must demonstrate management leadership and commitment to the program. The Injury Management/RTW audit element will evaluate the

level of leadership and commitment toward injury management/return-to-work services within the organization by assessing the following items:

- A written corporate statement or letter of intent outlining the company's value of, goals for, and commitment to the Injury Management/RTW program;
- A written Injury Management/RTW program;
- A system to track outcomes of the Injury Management/RTW Program and a process to address opportunities for improvement of the Injury Management/RTW program; and
- Resources have been provided to support the Injury Management/RTW process.

Resources, Education and Training

There should be an individual(s) assigned the duties to coordinate and be responsible for the Injury Management/RTW program. The person(s) must have an understanding of Injury Management/RTW principles and practices. This will include an understanding of relevant legislation. The audit will measure the following:

- Specific responsibilities and authority have been assigned for coordination of the program; and
- Adequate training is provided for persons responsible for groups involved in the Injury Management/RTW process.

Stay at Work and Return to Work Program

An effective Injury Management/RTW Program requires that systems are in place to evaluate injuries to determine the appropriate course of action when the injury is first reported to the employer. If there is an absence due to injury, reintegration into the workplace requires that a RTW framework be established prior to any injury occurring. Roles and responsibilities should be outlined and the possible work accommodations should be identified. RTW planning should be based on the workers physical abilities and skills. The audit will measure the following:

- A process to identify alternate duties;
- Procedure that includes modified duties and/or transitional return-to-work opportunities for injured workers before there is time loss;
- Procedure outlining the steps and responsibilities to reintegrate a worker back into the workplace following an injury; and
- Policies and/or procedures of various departments that support an effective Injury Management/RTW program.

Communication

Communication is an integral part of any Injury Management/RTW Program. Workers and supervisors should be made aware of the program and of its benefits. In addition, all supervisors and workers need to understand the processes involved. Employers must ensure workers are educated in the usage of an early intervention process, as well as, if time away from work is required, the assistance provided to reintegrate an injured worker back into the workplace. The audit will measure the following:

- A process to ensure all managers, supervisors and workers are advised of the Injury Management/RTW Program and its benefits;
- A system to ensure instructions surrounding the use of the Injury Management/RTW services has been communicated to workers; and
- A process to advise medical practitioners of the employer's Injury Management/RTW initiatives.