

Workplace Rehabilitation for Managers

Outline

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 - Definition of “workplace rehabilitation”
 - Goals of workplace rehabilitation
 - Obligations
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The Role of Managers in the Rehabilitation Process

- Positive manager/supervisor involvement in workplace rehabilitation can enhance outcomes for injured workers.
- The manager is often the individual who has the greatest opportunity to monitor a worker's progress and ensure restrictions set out in suitable duties plans are being followed.
- By taking an interest in the progress of injured workers, managers can reinforce the workers' perception that the employer is interested in their recovery.



Workplace Rehabilitation

- Workplace Rehabilitation is a system of rehabilitation that is initiated or managed by the employer to assist injured (or ill) workers to return to work.
- This includes injuries that only require medical/therapy treatment but no time off work.
- As the name indicates, workplace rehabilitation uses the workplace as a tool for rehabilitation – i.e. work activities are used to assist the worker in recovering from injury or illness.
- Workplace rehabilitation helps injured workers maintain their daily routine and allows for gradual increases in their level of involvement in particular activities as they recover from injury or illness.



Goals of Workplace Rehabilitation

- To return the injured worker to their pre-injury position and to maximise their independent functioning.
- To create an environment in which the rehabilitation of injured workers is an accepted practice.



Obligations – Managers

- Rehabilitation should be coordinated with and understood by line managers and supervisors.
- As an employer representative, the manager should also remember the employer's obligation to take all reasonable steps to assist or provide the worker with rehabilitation, particularly when considering the availability of suitable duties.



Obligations – Employers

Employers' obligations include:

- To complete and lodge Employer Report within 8 days of becoming aware of injury that may be compensable
- To take all reasonable steps to assist or provide the worker with rehabilitation for the period for which the worker is entitled to compensation
- If unable to provide suitable duties the employer must advise the insurer in writing (There are significant penalties for failing to do so – approx. \$16,000.00)



Obligations – Injured Workers

Injured workers' obligations include:

- To attend a medical practitioner for diagnosis and certification.
- To apply for compensation (from the insurer) on the approved form within 6 months of entitlement to compensation arising (Being accessed by a doctor, dentist, or for minor injuries a nurse).
- To mitigate loss by participating in rehabilitation as soon as practicable after the injury is sustained and for the period for which the worker is entitled to compensation.



How Managers may be involved

- Managers must recognise the requirement for early intervention in the case of a worker's injury and should take prompt action to ensure early injury reporting to the rehabilitation coordinator.
- Managers should encourage continued communication between the injured worker and the rehabilitation coordinator.
- Managers should monitor adherence to suitable duties plans.
- Managers may also raise co-workers' awareness of the injured worker's restrictions as set out in the suitable duties plan.



Paperwork

- **Job Task Analysis / Suitable Duties Plans:** Managers should liaise with the RRTWC to help ensure appropriate information about the job is available and suitable duties are selected for the worker's return to work program.
- **Employer Report:** Managers may sometimes be required to complete this section of the compensation application. They must remember that there are **strict timeframes** for submitting this paperwork.
- **Confidentiality:** managers must ensure that any information they have regarding the worker's medical condition is kept confidential.
- Managers do not have the right to access any medical information without the permission of the injured worker (on an Authority form).



Paperwork

Suitable Duties Plans: These plans assist injured workers in remaining in the workplace and returning to their usual duties.

Suitable duties plans take into consideration the following:

- The nature of the worker's incapacity and pre-injury employment
- Relevant medical information
- The employer's workplace rehabilitation policy and procedures
- The worker's age, education, skills and experience.

A suitable duties plan usually contains:

- Details of the duties the worker will perform for a particular week and
- Specific tasks they are restricted from performing.

As supervisor/manager, you must sign off on all suitable duties and plans.



Communication

- Good communication is essential to successful workplace rehabilitation.
- You should be familiar with your workplace rehabilitation coordinator so that you can direct any concerns regarding a worker's rehabilitation to them.
- Injured workers should know that their manager is interested in their recovery and has been involved in the process of selecting suitable duties.
- Managers should also seek advice from the workplace rehabilitation coordinator on maintaining contact with workers who are away from the workplace for longer periods due to injury or illness.





Barriers to Effective Rehabilitation

Managers can assist the rehabilitation coordinator in reducing some of the common barriers to effective rehabilitation.

Time delay from injury to intervention	Encourage workers to report injuries to rehabilitation coordinator (following any usual reporting to WHSO or First Aid).
Failure to forward paperwork to the insurer swiftly	Prompt workers to complete their paperwork and send it in or hand it to the rehabilitation coordinator.
Delay in commencing suitable duties	Be available to assist the worker and rehabilitation coordinator to select duties, and coordinate these once they are in place.



Benefits of Effective Rehabilitation

Employers:

- Retention of skilled workers
- Reduced claims cost
- Improved worker morale
- Improved industrial relations
- Timely/Effective risk management

Workers:

- Support during recovery
- Reduced pain and suffering
- Maintenance of employment
- Restoration of earning capacity
- Maintenance of self-esteem and social contact with workplace



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