

Illinois Risk Management Services

Workers' Compensation

CAPSTONE SERIES
Workers' Compensation

Return to Work Program

Capstone Achievement

A community hospital implemented a return to work program for employees who were injured.

Evidence Has Shown:

Employees who miss work for more than six months after a job-related injury have only a 50% likelihood of returning to work.

Employees who participate in medically appropriate work duties during their recovery period are more likely to remain employable throughout their lifetime.



Return to Work Success Stories:

A nurse fell and hit her head, causing headaches which limited her ability to work on a computer to no longer than 15 minutes. She was gradually brought back to work in another department until she was able to resume full-time duties in her position.

An ED technician broke his leg, requiring surgery. After discharge, he fell again and broke his wrist, requiring inpatient physical rehabilitation. Unable to perform essential job functions, he was offered modified duty in his department. After exhausting the Return to Work program, he was terminated. Later, he returned to work in the ED performing clerical duties with a permanent restriction.



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Administrative and Procedural Overview:

- Employee Health Services (EHS) Nurse reviews incident reports, Emergency Department (ED) reports and Departmental Manager notifications daily.
- Medical Director sees every employee with a work-related incident involving an ED visit.
- EHS conducts weekly Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) log reviews.
- EHS Manager oversees workers' compensation cases with assistance from Illinois Risk Management Services (IRMS).

If an Employee is Injured/Exposed on the Job:

- Manager is notified and employee is directed to EHS (or the ED after hours). Employee is advised to obtain a provider note identifying any work restrictions.
- Employee receives a work injury flyer and IRMS contact information.
- Employee completes an incident report.

Work Absences:

- If three days or more, employee must provide a work-release note from their provider.
- If more than 14 days, employee must contact HR to apply for a leave of absence.

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Return to Work Scenarios:

- 1. Return to Work Without Restriction:** As long as employee's provider approves.
- 2. Return to Work, but Unable to Perform Essential Job Functions:** Employees will be offered modified duty in or outside their home department, with payroll cost absorbed by the home department.
- 3. Unable to Return to Work:** If hospitalized overnight, a flower arrangement is sent to the employee. Medical Director follow up is required after every provider visit. Compensation policy is discussed and requires exhaustion of sick/vacation time before disability payments are made.

Transitional Work Program:

- The Transitional Work Program lasts 8–12 weeks. Employee initially returns to a light duty position, such as:
 - Filing
 - Answering phones
 - Proofreading
 - Patient chart audits
 - Concierge assistant
- If no physical progression after six weeks, a “staffing” meeting is held to develop a progress plan and discuss with the employee.

If Permanent Work Restrictions Apply:

- A staffing meeting is conducted to discuss any job accommodations.
- Employee provides an annual update of any ongoing restrictions with their provider and EHS.

OUTCOMES

The Return to Work program has helped employees re-engage in the work force, while demonstrating that hospital management values its employees. The program reduces hospital cost, fosters a culture of caring and offers injured employees an opportunity to remain gainfully employed.

Keys to Success:

1. Top-down management commitment;
2. Immediate review and care plan creation for employee injuries that fosters a return-to-work expectation; and
3. Interdepartmental collaboration to establish a return to work roadmap.

IHA Insurance Solutions/Workers' Compensation

IHA Insurance Solutions is a leading provider of workers' compensation services in Illinois. With a specialized focus on exposures for health care providers, we offer a high-quality coverage program, along with third-party claims administration and loss control services.

Our unique knowledge of the regulatory environment and practice patterns within Illinois health care organizations provides the expertise needed to reduce risk and claim expenses. Relying on a proactive and cooperative claims philosophy, our experienced team focuses on getting your injured employees back to work sooner and closing your claims as quickly as possible.

For more information about this best practice or Illinois Risk Management Services' programs, please contact: **Mike Baiardo, Vice President** | 630.276.5602 | mbaiardo@ihastaff.org