

Return to Work: WCB Assistance

An employer's return-to-work (RTW) process should outline when, how and who should to contact the Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) when the employer encounters a need for assistance with RTW efforts, or requires more information about an injured worker's capability to perform RTW duties. Early communication with the WCB, whenever the employer encounters a need or requires more information, facilitates a timely and successful RTW.

The WCB is charged with the legal responsibility and authority to determine an injured worker's:

- Acceptance of work injury claims
- Fitness for employment
- Loss of earning capacity
- Extent and/or duration of wage loss compensation entitlement
- Associated benefits and support covered by the WCB

The WCB does not direct the medical treatment of an injured worker. The injured worker's health-care provider(s) (HCPs) direct the injured worker's medical treatment. The WCB supports and works with the HCP(s) to provide the right care at the right time, and identify and incorporate suitable alternate/modified work, with the end objective of an optimal recovery and safe return to work.

The WCB operations staff can initiate discussions with the employer to determine if the employer has a RTW process and/or is willing to provide suitable alternate/modified work for the injured worker. If suitable alternate/modified work is available, the WCB's operations staff can help make the injured worker's RTW plan successful.

If an employer with a documented RTW process has returned the injured worker to suitable alternate/modified work prior to the WCB's acceptance of the claim, the employer should communicate this to the WCB with the completed medical restrictions/capabilities form and/or documented RTW plan, if requested.

Having RTW processes at a workplace does not mean that every individual can immediately return to work, or that all RTW plans will go smoothly. Employers can actively manage their RTW processes when faced with complicated situations. Employers can also request meetings with WCB staff to support and discuss RTW issues. WCB operations staff may include other areas of the WCB to help with RTW issues occurring in a specific situation.



Even if an employer has an established RTW process, there may be times when the employer encounters difficulties in returning an injured worker to suitable alternate/modified work in a timely manner, and may require the WCB's assistance. The following are examples of when an employer should contact the WCB:

- The injured worker is refusing to take the employer's medical restrictions/capabilities form to his/her HCP.
- The injured worker's HCP is refusing to complete the employer's medical restrictions/capabilities form and/or provided a "total time off work" note.
- The employer has concerns or questions about the need for additional medical restrictions/capabilities to determine suitable RTW options.
- The employer has questions or concerns about an injured worker's ability to return to work and/or limited RTW options available.
- An employer has offered an injured worker alternate/modified work within the injured worker's medical capabilities, but the injured worker is not prepared to accept the work.

The WCB operations staff can contact the HCP(s) to help facilitate obtaining additional information for the employer regarding an injured worker's medical restrictions/capabilities, and clarify that employers may have modified/alternative RTW options.

Depending on the outcome of any investigation into RTW issues, a RTW plan may go forward, making modifications to a proposed plan. A RTW plan not going forward, in some circumstances, may result in a suspension and/or termination of wage-replacement benefits. The WCB notifies an employer and injured worker as soon as possible after obtaining more information about medical restrictions/capabilities and the potential for alternate/modified work.

