

Return to Work: Functional Rehabilitation Philosophy

A return-to-work (RTW) plan is consistent with the functional rehabilitation model of care, which uses the restoration of function as the first measure of treatment success, and recognizes that successful long-term recovery is associated with a return to function.

The Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) recognizes the important role RTW plays in promoting an injured worker's recovery and reducing the risk of chronic disability.

The principle of RTW is to balance an injured worker's medical abilities with assigned work tasks in order to:

- prevent further injury
- maintain current capabilities/function
- restore function
- facilitate optimal recovery (both timeline and outcome)

The initial goal of RTW is to return an injured worker, as soon as medically capable, to safe, productive work consistent with their functional abilities.

The ongoing goal of RTW is to balance assigned work with the injured worker's medical abilities to facilitate the healing process and the restoration of function.

The end goal of RTW is to restore the injured worker's abilities.

Maintaining the balance between the injured worker's medical abilities and the work assigned involves a collaborative approach between the injured worker, employer, care provider and Saskatchewan WCB. A continuous review of the injured worker's assigned work tasks or RTW plan is required as his/her medical abilities change.

RTW Plan: Definition

A return-to-work (RTW) plan is a collaborative approach to support an injured worker by providing safe, productive alternate/modified work within their medical abilities that helps facilitate recovery. A RTW plan accommodates an injured worker's functional limitations, rehabilitation and treatment needs within their skills and abilities.



The WCB requires that an injured worker's RTW plan be:

- Within the medical abilities of the injured worker: does not place the injured worker at risk of re-injury or interfere with his/her ability to recover.
- Safe: does not endanger the health or safety of the injured worker or his/her coworkers.
- Within the skills and abilities of the injured worker.
- Productive: contributes to the objectives or operations of the employer.

The primary goal of a RTW plan is to return the injured worker to full duties with the pre-injury employer as soon as medically possible.

RTW: Shared Goal

The injured worker, the employer, the health-care provider and the WCB share the common goal of minimizing loss associated with a workplace injury. The reasons may differ, but none of the parties want to see an injury get worse, and all want to see an optimal recovery.

Shared Goal: Minimize Loss	
Want	Don't Want
Prevent further injury	Cause further injury
Facilitate recovery	Delay recovery
Restore function	Cause further loss of function
Achieve financial stability	Cause loss of wages or increased costs to system

The shared objectives of RTW include:

- Safeguard the injured worker's health and well-being, both physical and psychological
- Facilitate the injured worker's recovery
- Protect the injured worker from disability
- Protect the injured worker's employability

