

# Quick facts:

## Facts for return-to-work programs

### Commitment

WorkplaceNL recognizes the importance of developing and implementing workplace-based return-to-work programs. These programs allow employers and employees to take a proactive approach in assisting injured workers to return to safe and productive work activities as soon as possible following an injury. An effective return-to-work program can provide many benefits to all partners in the return-to-work process.

Organizational commitment is one of the fundamental building blocks of an effective return-to-work program. Visible commitment from the top management in an organization provides the support necessary to ensure the success of the return-to-work program.

Commitment to the return-to-work program can be expressed in several ways including developing a return-to-work policy statement, assigning the necessary resources to the program, communicating the program to all employees and jointly working with employee representatives in the development, monitoring and evaluation of the program.

#### What is a return-to-work policy statement?

A return-to-work policy statement is a written formalized commitment to the return-to-work process. It clearly outlines the philosophy and goals of the organization in assisting an injured worker to return to work and provides the objectives of the program.

#### Who must develop the return-to-work policy statement?

The return-to-work policy statement must be developed in joint consultation with the union or employee representatives. This allows for buy-in from all parties involved in the return-to-work process.

#### What must be included in the return-to-work policy statement?

The return-to-work policy statement must include information that is relevant to the overall functioning of the

program. These statements are usually one or two pages in length and should be easy to read and understand by all employees. Specific information regarding the return-to-work program should be included in policies and/or procedures.

#### Where should the return-to-work policy statement be posted?

The return-to-work policy statement should be posted in prominent areas of all worksites. These areas could include bulletin boards, lunchrooms, staff gathering areas, meeting rooms etc.

#### Can the Return-To-Work and the Occupational Health and Safety policy statements be combined?

Yes, these statements can be separate or combined depending on the workplace preference. This is possible as long as the specific requirements outlined in both the occupational health and safety and return-to-work criteria are incorporated into one general policy statement.

#### What are the benefits of demonstrating commitment in the return-to-work program?

##### *Benefits to the Employer*

- Encourages and promotes buy-in from all parties involved in the return-to-work process.
- Provides for a consistent approach when dealing with work related injuries.
- Demonstrates concern for the best interests of workers and indicates that workers are viewed as valuable members of the company/organization.
- Improves morale and employee/employer relations by committing to return-to-work programming and involving participation and contribution of workers.
- Reduces lost time from work because employees know their employer will take the reasonable steps necessary to facilitate return to work.
- Meets the requirements of PRIME.

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### **Benefits to the Worker**

- Provides confidence that their employer is committed to returning a worker back to work and therefore minimizing anxiety about job security and lost time from work following injury.
- Allows participation in the return-to-work process and improved programming that will meet the needs of all parties.
- Improves understanding of the expected steps followed by all parties in the return-to-work process.
- Ensures worker representation and union participation where appropriate.

## Your PRIME Readiness **CHECKLIST**

### **A return-to-work policy statement is required by all employers meeting the requirements of PRIME**

- Does the organization have a written return-to-work policy statements? (Can be combined with Occupational Health & Safety Policy Statement).

### **Criteria**

- The statement must be signed and dated by the highest ranking official in the business/organization and/or workplace, which could include CEO, president, regional manager.
- The statement must be developed in joint and meaningful consultation with workers.
- The statement must:
  - State your commitment to early and safe return-to-work practices after an accident or injury
  - Include a reference to communicating with the employee during the return-to-work process

- Include a reference to Section 89 of the *Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act*
  - State the organization's commitment to protecting confidential information
  - Outline the roles and responsibilities of the parties involved in return-to-work: employer, injured worker, health care providers, co-workers, WorkplaceNL and, where appropriate, union and return-to-work representatives
  - Include a reference to the Hierarchy of Return-to-Work according to WorkplaceNL's Policy RE-18 "Hierarchy of Return-to-Work and Accommodation".
- The policy(ies) must be reviewed at least annually and updated, as required.
- Employers must ensure that all workers are informed of the policy(ies) and the application to their specific workplace(s).
- Employers who have a re-employment obligation under section 89.1 of the *Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act* must also reflect that obligation in their return-to-work policy.

### **For more information on return to work program injury reporting please contact**

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