

**Starke County Employee's**

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JUN 17 2013

STARKE COUNTY AUDITOR

***Return to Work Policy***

# **Return to Work Policy**

## **(Starke County Governmental Employees)**

### **Purpose**

This program is designed to provide policies and procedures for managing the return to work of injured company employees with minimum time lost

### **Policy**

It is the policy of Starke County to provide a place of employment that is free from recognized hazards that cause or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to employees or the public. However when serious physical harm does occur to employees, Starke County is committed to providing quality medical care and managing those costs associated with that medical care. Starke County is also committed to the effective return to work of injured employees while enhancing their recovery. **NOTE: THIS POLICY COVERS ONLY INJURIES OCCURED WHILE ON THE JOB.**

### **Background**

Returning employees to work who have been injured in the performance of their jobs is an important component of Starke County's loss control program. Benefits of a return to work program include:

- Faster, more effective healing
- Safer work environment
- Direct and indirect savings in lost wages, medical costs and productivity
- Improved morale by providing support to employees with alternate assignments during recuperation.

Statistic have shown that without a return to work program, employees have little incentive to return to work and are less likely to return to work the longer they are out of work. This safety policy and procedure includes provisions for supervisory training, a discussion of the return to work process, presents details on Starke County's preferred medical provider network and presents information on transitional work assignments, permanent job modifications and new position assignment requirements.

### **Responsibilities**

#### **Management/Elected Officials/Department Heads**

- Provide resources and support to supervisors in the return to work program.

- Assist in employee placement decisions.
- Encourage proper and ethical practices.

### **Supervisors/Foreman**

- Complete accident and other report forms in the event of an injury
- Pre-determine alternate duty options for the positions under their control
- Provide job descriptions and alternate duty options to the Workers' Compensation Administrator, and Human Resources Manager
- Complete Return to Work forms upon the return to work of the injured employee

### **Employees**

Employees are responsible for immediately reporting any injuries to their supervisor and going to the preferred provider as directed by their supervisor. They must also cooperate with the Workers' Compensation Administrator's, Safety and Human Resources Departments.

### **Workers' Compensation Administrator**

- Administer the Starke County's Return to Work Program
- Coordinate with preferred providers, Human Resources Department, and supervisors in the placement of employees into transitional work assignments, permanently modified jobs or new positions
- Coordinate program communication by ensuring that timely distribution of program materials are performed
- Coordinate vocational rehabilitation training for employees who have received a permanent disability as a result of a job injury
- Maintain a central list of all Starke County's preferred providers

### **Safety Manager**

- Provide prompt assistance to managers, supervisors, and others as necessary on any matter concerning this safety policy and procedure.
- Assist in and develop the Return to Work Program training
- Annually compile trends and statistical reports for tracking results of Starke County's return to work program.
- Provide consultative and audit assistance to ensure effective implementation of this safety policy and procedure
- Assist Elected Officials/Department Heads/ Supervisors/Foreman in returning employees back to work
- Meet with injured employees to explain alternate duty position(s)

## **Human Resources Manager**

- Assist the Workers' Compensation Administrator in placement decisions that require new position assignments
- Provide information regarding wage and salary grade equity issues
- Approve temporary assignments greater than ninety days

## **Definitions**

**Preferred Provider** - A healthcare provider that has entered into an agreement with the company to provide prompt healthcare services to an employee injured during the performance of their jobs.

**Transitional Work Assignment** - Work assignments (duties) that are short term and those employees with temporary restrictions are given upon return to work following an injury.

**Workers' Compensation Leave** - Period of time that employees are recuperating from job-related injuries and during which the employee receive 66.667 % of their regular pay.

## **General Information**

### **Training**

Supervisors must accurately understand their key role in this program. Therefore, supervisors should receive training that includes specific details on the Return to Work process and their responsibilities under this program. This training will be initially conducted as a one-time training with re-training every two years.

### **Return to Work Process**

When an employee, who has been injured on the job and placed on workers' compensation leave, has been released to return to work by the treating physician, there are three possible return to work options.

**Option 1:** An employee has reached maximum medical improvement and has been released to return to work by the treating physician. The employee is then returned to the original position he/she held prior to workers' compensation leave

**Option 2:** An employee has not reached maximum medical improvement and is ready to return to a transitional work assignment (limited or modified work duty) with approval of the treating physician, but retains some disability which prevents successful performance in the original position. The company will provide work reassignment suitable to the employee's capacity.

## **Return to Work Program Guide**

Every employee should be entered into the Return to Work Program upon medical certification that the employee may return to some type of work duty. Written return to work authorization must be obtained from the preferred medical provider.

Injured employees should usually be under the direct supervision of the supervisor in the area in which he/she is working. However, supervisors should understand their responsibility and be willing to work with employees not normally under their control.

The Workers' Compensation Administrator and the treating physician shall make the final decision, with input from the injured employee's supervisor and Human Resources Manager, as to when an employee returns to work in either his/her original position, a transitional work assignment, a permanently modified job or a re-assigned position.

### **Preferred Medical Provider**

The preferred provider is a physician who has agreed to treat injured company employees when such injuries arise out of the performance of their job duties. This preferred provider list should include emergency room physicians at IU Starke Hospital. This list shall be maintained by the Safety Manager with updated lists being made available to the Workers' Compensation Administrator. The preferred provider list is to be updated annually.

### **Transitional Work Assignments**

Employees may be provided with transitional work assignments during their recuperation in order to maintain desirable productivity levels. These assignments should be short term in nature until the employee is able to return to his/her original job assignment.

### **Program Communication**

The Return to Work Program must be effectively communicated to injured employees, affected supervisors, and preferred providers. Program communication will be achieved by the training of supervisors, safety orientation training for employees and the distribution of program literature.

*Injured employees and affected supervisors* - The Workers' Compensation Administrator will provide an employee information package on Workers' Compensation and Return to Work information that provides specific details on injured employees and affected supervisors responsibilities and required actions.

### **Matching Employees to Alternate Duty**

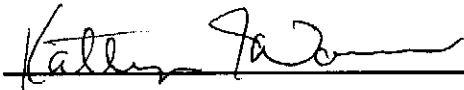
**Step 1.** The Workers' Compensation Administrator will list all restrictions provided by the physician.

**Step 2.** The Human Resource Manager will list all alternate duty jobs and their wages, including regular jobs with modifications available.

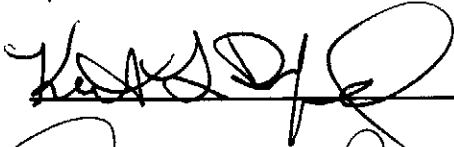
**Step 3.** The doctor's restrictions are then being matched to the best possible alternate duty. In the case where there may be a unique restriction from the physician, a check of the alternate duty job chosen will be made to ensure it meets with the restrictions or can be modified to meet the restriction.

We have hereunto set our hand this 13<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2013.

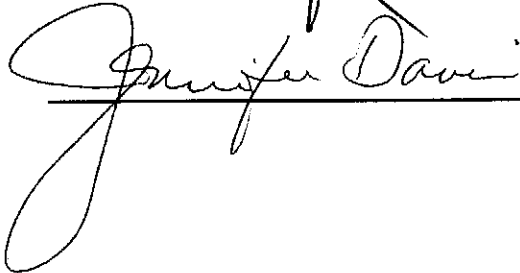
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