

Return-to-Work Policy

POLICY

When an employee is off work due to an occupational illness or injury, the home department is responsible for facilitating the employee's earliest possible return to productivity.

State Requirements

This section describes WSU's return-to-work policy and program in conformance with WAC 357-19-525 and -535.

Coordination

The WSU Pullman Human Resource Services (HRS) Office coordinates the return-to-work program for WSU.

Eligible Employees

To be eligible to participate in the return-to-work program an employee must:

- Have sustained an occupational illness or injury that makes him or her medically unable, as defined by a health care provider, to return to the full functions of his or her position on a temporary basis, *and*
- Be capable of carrying out work of a lighter or modified nature as evidenced by a written statement from a health care provider.

Training

Departmental administrators are responsible for ensuring that each supervisor attends at least one training session regarding the return-to-work program. Pullman HRS conducts the training sessions. Contact HRS for a schedule of supervisory training or go to the Training area of the HRS website at:

hrs.wsu.edu/training

DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Immediately following an employee's report of an occupational accident or illness that results in one eight-hour day or more of work lost, the immediate supervisor or other designated individual notifies HRS by telephone or e-mail.

See *SPPM 2.24* regarding reporting accidental injuries and work-related illnesses.

Employee Contact

Departmental personnel should stay in regular contact with HRS and/or the employee regarding the employee's expected return-to-work date. The department is to encourage the off-work employee to attend department meetings and training sessions if the employee is physically able and released to do so by his or her health care provider.

RETURN TO WORK

Human Resource Services works with the employee and the health care provider to obtain medical documentation establishing a date by which the employee can return to work in *any* capacity if he or she cannot yet perform regular duties.

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Temporary Duties

With assistance from HRS, the department identifies departmental duties within the employee's physical capacity. The duties may be a temporary modification of the employee's regular duties. One option is part-time work with gradually increasing hours. Following are other actions to consider:

- Human Resource Services may consult with vocational specialists regarding temporarily modifying job duties; in which case HRS secures the health care provider's written approval of the proposed duties.
- Modified duty work is to be defined in writing with an appropriate time limit, e.g., 30 days, 60 days.
- Temporary modified work may be temporary (hourly) paid work.
- The department offers the temporary duties to the employee.

Adjusting Duties

In order to determine whether the employee has an increased physical capacity, HRS requires updated written documentation from the health care provider at the end of each time limit. Hours and duties are adjusted accordingly until the employee returns to regular duties.

NOTE: If the department does not provide temporary modified-duty work for the employee, the University may provide suitable temporary work in another department if such work is available. All wages are paid by the original employing department in such cases.

Reasonable Accommodation

A reasonable accommodation request is a request from an employee that the University provide either of the following:

- An accommodation so that the employee can continue to perform the essential functions of his or her position.
- Alternative employment that accommodates the employee's disabilities.

Reasonable accommodations usually occur when an employee's duty restrictions are permanent or long-term.

If an employee believes that reasonable accommodation is a consideration, he or she should consult with HRS. (*BPPM* 60.21; *WAC* 357-26)