



The Safety Zone

The Newsletter of the AHA Workers' Compensation Self-Insured Trust

Why Hold Weekly Meetings With Injured Employees?

Every injured employee on transitional duty should meet WEEKLY with the Transitional Duty (TD) Coordinator, if your company has one, or the supervisor in charge of the injured worker's return-to-work. There are many benefits to weekly meetings. Among them are:

It keeps employees in the loop at the workplace. This keeps them mentally engaged in your workplace, and thus more likely to fully recover and return to work. It also keeps the employee socially connected to their co-workers and supervisors. Employees who feel valued, important and supported are more likely to want to return to work sooner.

It gives employers the opportunity to determine increased capacity for transitional duty assignments. These meetings help determine if increasing strength or capability is possible to allow the employee to assume additional job tasks. There should be a gradually increasing capacity. The employee should bring any recent medical information to the meeting. This should include any changes in medications, work restrictions and recommendations. It is good to vary the time of the meeting each week to see if the employee's work capacity varies at different times of the day or week. For employees who cannot attend on-site meetings, you might discuss options for a field-based nurse case manager to visit the employees.

It lets employees bring up any obstacles to returning to work. Sometimes there may be simple reasonable accommodations that an employer can provide, such as an ergonomic chair or keyboard, that can help an employee return to work sooner. However, unless the employer knows about the difficulties the employee has, the employer will not be able to address these needs.

It allows employer and employee to coordinate new TD capacity, look at new positions and discuss transitional duty options. If the employee is ready to increase their duties, come up with new tasks that are within their capacity. Do not make the employee feel that they are not valued or are being replaced, by not allowing them to assume tasks as they are able. Employees who do not feel wanted are not going to want to come back. Customize transitional duty tasks (and job schedules) so they can be restructured easily to accommodate increased ability as the injured worker recuperates. If the employee is having some setbacks, consult your transitional duty job bank. This is a



list of assignments that supervisors and employees make of a "wish list" of things they would like to have done but have not had time to do. Include these items on the transitional duty task bank.

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news & notes

LIGHT DUTY RETURN-TO-WORK

The best way to put an end to a Workers' Comp Claim is to develop a light duty return-to-work program encouraging injured employees to return to work.

Statistics show that if an injured employee is out of work for more than a year, the chances of ever getting that employee back to work decreases dramatically.

The feature article *Why Hold Weekly Meetings With Injured Employees?* discusses how employers can deal with injured employees by keeping the lines of communication open and by keeping the employee engaged.

This is a philosophy that our trust has adopted. All members are required to adopt a return-to-work (light duty) program and manage injured employees just as you would manage a healthy workforce.

*Louis Fey Jr., CPCU, CIC, AIC
VP - BXS Insurance Services, Inc.*



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Why Hold Weekly Meetings With Injured Employees, continued

Guidelines for these meetings include:

- Present the cost-savings benefits of returning employees to work in *transitional duty to build and maintain management commitment.
- Invite a member of management to join the injury management team.
- Work with senior management and middle managers to implement a dollar-for-dollar charge-back system to the units where losses occur.
- Design work-arounds to facilitate a timely return to work.
- Invite the employee and a family member to bring the family on board.
- Make sure to mail a letter to the employee's home address advising of the time and date of the meeting. You should also send an email reminder if the employee has internet access. The letter should request their medical restrictions and include a work ability form for their medical provider to complete. Remind them to bring the completed form to the meeting.
- Provide transportation to these meetings if the employee is unable to drive.
- Make sure to coordinate your Transitional Duty Policy with all other state and federal leave and absence regulations such as ADA, FMLA, COBRA and ERISA.

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*Contact Jill Johnson, Risk Management Resources (RMR), at (501) 614-1112 or jill.johnson@bxsi.com, for a list of transitional job descriptions for the healthcare industry.

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Got News?

Do you have news that needs to be circulated or have a subject you would like us to address? Let us know by emailing the newsletter editor

AHA Workers' Compensation Self-Insured Trust Program is administered by Risk Management Resources (RMR), a division of BXS Insurance Services, Inc. www.bxsi.com. In March 2003 the AHA Workers' Compensation Self-Insured Trust was established. The program provides workers' compensation coverage to AHA members.

Risk Management Resources, the administrator for the program, assists members in the areas of claims management, safety and loss control. Tina Creel, President of AHA Services, Inc., is the Group Manager of the Trust and provides oversight of the day-to-day operation of the Trust.

The Board of Trustees provides oversight of the overall operation of the Group Trust.

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