

Return to work programs for workers

Fact sheet



Injured at work?

Has your GP certified you fit to work modified duties or partial hours? If so, your employer (or insurer) is required to develop a **return to work program** to assist you with remaining at or returning to work as soon as possible*.

You, your employer, insurer or treating medical practitioner may choose to engage a workplace rehabilitation provider to facilitate the return to work process.

When developing the program, input will need to be sought from you, your GP and your employer about duties that are suitable for you as you recover.

It helps for all parties to meet to discuss what should be included and any concerns you may have. This may be done through a case conference or a workplace meeting.

*Under WA's workers' compensation legislation, employers must provide an injured worker with their pre-injury job, if it is reasonably practicable, or another job comparable in status and pay to the worker's pre-injury position for which they are qualified and capable of performing.

This requirement applies for a 12 month period from the day the worker becomes entitled to receive weekly payments. For the purposes of calculating the 12 month period, any period of total capacity for work is not included.

What is a return to work program?

A return to work program is a written plan designed to provide you with workplace support during your recovery. When this is the case, your doctor will give you a medical certificate certifying what you can and can't do.

This information is used by your workplace insurer or workplace rehabilitation provider, to develop an individualised plan outlining duties that are suitable for you to carry out until you have fully recovered or achieved optimal improvement. It will also outline what support should be provided to you during your recovery.

What should be included in a return to work program?

Under WA's workers' compensation legislation, all return to work programs must set out in writing:

- your name and the name of your employer
- the goal of the program (example: 'Kerry will return to her role as Records Administrator, performing modified duties and graduated hours for a period of four weeks')
- the actions needed to support you in returning to work, including who will do them (example: 'Sally (supervisor) will meet with Kerry one to two times per week to monitor her progress, talk through what is working well and discuss concerns')
- a signed statement that you agree with the content of the program.

You (the worker) and your GP should be provided with a copy of the program and given any updates as your health and capacity for work continues to improve.

What can I do?

When your GP certifies you with a capacity to work suitable (or modified) duties and/or hours, there are a number of things you can do to help your recovery and workplace participation, such as:

- find out about your employer's injury management system and who is nominated as the injury management coordinator (IMC)
- make or stay in contact with your employer (including the nominated IMC)
- communicate with your doctor and your employer about what you think you can do at work
- actively participate in meetings to develop or review your return to work program
- talk to your doctor about what is expected with your recovery (who have you been referred to, for what reason, what should be the outcome and when?)
- provide feedback about how you are going to those people supporting your recovery and return to work, including your:
 - GP
 - employer (i.e. supervisor and IMC)
 - workplace rehabilitation provider
 - other treating health practitioner.