

Return to Work Planning and Accommodation

Accommodation: A modification or adjustment to a job, work environment, or the way things are usually done during the return to work process, enabling an employee with an illness or injury to perform their essential job functions. Accommodations can include changes in work schedules, job restructuring, or the provision of specialized equipment.

American Disabilities Act (ADA): A civil rights law in the United States that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public. The ADA defines a person with a disability as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

Case Management: A collaborative process that assesses, plans, implements, coordinates, monitors, and evaluates the options and services required to meet an individual's health needs, using communication and available resources to promote quality, cost-effective outcomes.

Disability Management: A proactive process that focuses on identifying and addressing issues that may affect an employee's ability to perform their job duties due to a disability or medical condition. The goal of disability management is to facilitate the employee's return to work and maintain their productivity and engagement.

Ergonomics: The scientific study of people at work, focusing on the design of the work environment, equipment, and tasks to fit the worker. The goal of ergonomics is to reduce workplace injuries and improve productivity, job satisfaction, and comfort.

Fitness for Duty: A medical determination that an employee is physically and mentally able to perform the essential functions of their job, with or without accommodations. A fitness for duty evaluation is typically conducted by a healthcare provider and is used to ensure that an employee can safely return to work after an illness or injury.

Gradual Return to Work: A return to work strategy that allows an employee to gradually increase their work hours and duties over time, rather than returning to full-time work all at once. Gradual return to work programs can help employees with medical conditions or disabilities ease back into the workforce and reduce the risk of re-injury or relapse.

Injured Worker: An employee who has suffered an injury or illness as a result of their job duties. Injured workers are entitled to workers' compensation benefits, including medical treatment, wage replacement, and vocational rehabilitation services.

Job Analysis: A process of evaluating the essential functions, duties, and requirements of a job, including the physical and mental demands of the position. Job analysis is used to determine whether an employee can perform the essential functions of their job with or without accommodations, and to identify potential

barriers to employment or return to work.

Reasonable Accommodation: A modification or adjustment to a job, work environment, or the way things are usually done that enables a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of their job. Reasonable accommodations can include changes in work schedules, job restructuring, or the provision of specialized equipment.

Return to Work Coordinator: An individual responsible for facilitating the return to work process for employees who have been absent due to illness or injury. The return to work coordinator works with the employee, their healthcare provider, and the employer to develop a return to work plan, coordinate accommodations, and monitor the employee's progress.

Return to Work Plan: A written plan that outlines the steps and accommodations required for an employee to return to work after an illness or injury. The plan is developed in collaboration with the employee, their healthcare provider, and the employer, and may include gradual return to work schedules, job modifications, or the provision of assistive technology.

Transitional Work: Temporary work assignments that are designed to help an employee with a medical condition or disability gradually return to their regular job duties. Transitional work assignments may involve modified or light-duty tasks, and are typically used as part of a gradual return to work program.

Vocational Rehabilitation: A process of evaluating, planning, and providing services to help an individual with a disability return to work or maintain employment. Vocational rehabilitation services may include job placement assistance, job coaching, and training in new skills.

Workers' Compensation: A state-regulated insurance program that provides medical treatment, wage replacement, and vocational rehabilitation services to employees who have been injured or become ill as a result of their job duties. Workers' compensation is a no-fault system, meaning that employees are entitled to benefits regardless of who was at fault for the injury or illness.

Accommodation: An accommodation is a modification or adjustment to a job, work environment, or the way things are usually done during the return to work process. Accommodations enable employees with disabilities or medical conditions to perform their essential job functions. Examples of accommodations include changes in work schedules, job restructuring, or the provision of specialized equipment.

Case Management: Case management is a collaborative process that assesses, plans, implements, coordinates, monitors, and evaluates the options and services required to meet an individual's health needs, using communication and available resources to promote quality, cost-effective outcomes. Case management is often used in the context of return to work planning to ensure that employees receive the necessary medical treatment and support to return to work as soon as possible.

Disability Management: Disability management is a proactive process that focuses on identifying and addressing issues that may affect an employee's ability to perform their job duties due to a disability or medical condition. The goal of disability management is to facilitate the employee's return to work and maintain their productivity and engagement. Disability management programs may include

accommodations, modified work schedules, and vocational rehabilitation services.

Ergonomics: Ergonomics is the scientific study of people at work, focusing on the design of the work environment, equipment, and tasks to fit the worker. Ergonomics is an important consideration in return to work planning, as it can help prevent workplace injuries and reduce the risk of re-injury or relapse.

Fitness for Duty: Fitness for duty is a medical determination that an employee is physically and mentally able to perform the essential functions of their job, with or without accommodations. A fitness for duty evaluation is typically conducted by a healthcare provider and is used to ensure that an employee can safely return to work after an illness or injury.

Gradual Return to Work: Gradual return to work is a return to work strategy that allows an employee to gradually increase their work hours and duties over time, rather than returning to full-time work all at once. Gradual return to work programs can help employees with medical conditions or disabilities ease back into the workforce and reduce the risk of re-injury or relapse. Gradual return to work programs may include modified work schedules, transitional work assignments, or job modifications.

Injured Worker: An injured worker is an employee who has suffered an injury or illness as a result of their job duties. Injured workers are entitled to workers' compensation benefits, including medical treatment, wage replacement, and vocational rehabilitation services. Injured workers may also be eligible for accommodations or modified work schedules to facilitate their return to work.

Job Analysis: Job analysis is the process of evaluating the essential functions, duties, and requirements of a job, including the physical and mental demands of the position. Job analysis is used to determine whether an employee can perform the essential functions of their job with or without accommodations, and to identify potential barriers to employment or return to work.

Reasonable Accommodation: A reasonable accommodation is a modification or adjustment to a job, work environment, or the way things are usually done that enables a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of their job. Reasonable accommodations can include changes in work schedules, job restructuring, or the provision of specialized equipment. Employers are required to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities, unless doing so would create an undue hardship.

Return to Work Coordinator: A return to work coordinator is an individual responsible for facilitating the return to work process for employees who have been absent due to illness or injury. The return to work coordinator works with the employee, their healthcare provider, and the employer to develop a return to work plan, coordinate accommodations, and monitor the employee's progress.

Return to Work Plan: A return to work plan is a written plan that outlines the steps and accommodations required for an employee to return to work after an illness or injury. The plan is developed in collaboration with the employee, their healthcare provider, and the employer.