



**Policy #66**

**Early and Safe Return to Work Policy**

**Approved by Council on: October 19, 2016**

---

## **Early and Safe Return to Work (ESRTW)**

### **Purpose**

To provide a fair and consistent policy for the rehabilitation of employees who have been injured on the job, the Corporation recognizes the benefits of a formal rehabilitation program and will undertake to provide meaningful employment for both permanently and temporarily disabled employees. The goal is to provide injured workers with the opportunity to return to work within their level of ability as soon as possible following the injury/illness.

### **Associated Legislation**

- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
- Workplace Safety and Insurance Act
- Ontario Rights Code
- Employment Standards Act

### **Objectives**

The objectives of the Early and Safe Return to Work (ESRTW) policy are:

- To achieve ESRTW with the provision of suitable work which meets the following guidelines:
  - the employee has the skills for, or can be trained to do this work.
  - the work is within the employee's physical abilities.
- To shorten periods of disability, and lost time.
- To provide modified work for the employee, that is both safe and productive.
- To assist employee in maintaining a sense of confidence and self-esteem for themselves and their families during the period of disability.

The modified work program will be tailored to each employee's specific requirements, and this goal is more readily achieved when a team effort is used for modified work/rehabilitation planning.

### **Responsibility**

The Department Head and workplace supervisor are responsible for ensuring that every reasonable effort is made to provide suitable modified work to any employee who is unable to perform his/her duties as a consequence of an occupational injury or illness.

The injured worker is responsible for active participation in the modified work program, as defined in this policy.

# Application

## General:

Modified work is any job, task, function or combination thereof that a worker, who suffers from a diminished capacity, may perform safely without risk of re-injury. The work must be productive and the result of the work must have value. The program must be seen as temporary, generally not to exceed 8-12 weeks in duration, and is intended to assist the employee in gradually returning to his/her regular pre-injury duties. Every department will try to accommodate any employee unable to perform their regular duties. Where the employee's "home department" is unable to provide a suitable work assignment, an attempt will be made to place the employee in another department within the Corporation. This process will be co-ordinated by Human Resources Department and/or the CAO.

## Duties:

The duties of the workplace supervisor, in conjunction with input and advice from the Department Head, Human Resources, and/or CAO, are to:

- Meet with the worker to set program goals and objectives.
- Determine if outside professionals are needed (e.g. Ergonomics Specialist).
- Establish individual programs for workers, with the help of other professionals, if required.
- Organize the placement of injured workers in modified jobs with approval of the CAO.
- Meet with the employee on the first day back and facilitate the return to work program.
- Arrange meetings with the worker, as required, to monitor the status of worker and discuss strategies for future development of the program.
- Educate workers about the modified work program, safety practices and the Workplace Safety Insurance Board.
- Develop an individual program for the worker and keep him/her actively involved in the rehabilitation plan by setting goals, maintaining continuous contact and monitoring progress.
- Keep minutes of all meetings with the worker to be kept in the employee's personnel file.

The duties of the worker are to:

- Maintain regular contact with the workplace supervisor.
- Obtain clearance from the treating health care professional for the return to modified work.
- Notify the relevant WSIB personnel and the supervisor, of availability for modified work.
- Take an active role in developing his/her individual modified work program.
- Communicate any concerns to the workplace supervisor so that potential problems can be resolved immediately.
- Ensure that other scheduled activities, such as physiotherapy or doctor's appointments do not interfere with the return to work.

## Procedures

### **Following an injury:**

For an injury requiring treatment by a health care professional, depending on the nature/severity of the injury, medical documentation provided by the human resources department will be required to be completed for time off or return to modified work. The completed form will be used to tailor a program for returning to work specifically to the employee's abilities. Any costs associated with having these forms filled out may be reimbursed to the employee through the Township of Southgate in house spending account.

Whenever requested by the Township throughout the duration of the claim, the employee will have updated forms or letters completed by the attending regulated health care professional. Regular contact between the employee and the supervisor is to be maintained throughout the employee's recovery period, with progress meetings held at a minimum suggested frequency of once every two weeks, and preferably following the employee's medical appointments, if possible.

A copy of the completed documents will be given to the workplace supervisor at these progress meetings and the injured employee's progress shall be jointly reviewed and initialled by both the supervisor and the employee.

### **Modified Work Implementation:**

When the health care professional indicates that the employee is available for modified duties, the supervisor and the employee will meet to discuss what work options are available, those being, in order of priority:

- A modified pre-injury job
- An alternate job
- Another suitable job

It may be necessary to modify the pre-injury job on a temporary or permanent basis, to accommodate the employee's physical restrictions. This may include, but not be limited to:

- Regular job/tasks may be changed, redesigned or physically modified.
- Hours may be reduced (e.g. fewer days per week or fewer hours per day than normal).
- The volume of work performed may be reduced.
- Co-workers may provide assistance for more difficult tasks.

If the pre-injury job cannot be modified to accommodate the injured employee's needs, alternate jobs may be considered. An alternate job is one that involves work that is approximately the same level within the organization, looking first at the "home" department, and then all outside departments. When looking at alternate jobs, consideration should be given to:

- The employee's previous work history
- Transferable skills

When neither the pre-injury job nor an alternate job is appropriate, other suitable jobs should be considered. Other suitable jobs are defined as those jobs within the capacity of the worker and which pose no health or safety risks to him/her, but may be quite different from the pre-injury job.

If medical documentation is received indicating that the injury/illness is likely to be permanent and the worker is not ever expected to recover sufficiently to perform the essential duties of the regular work, appropriate parties will be notified and will assist in the process of attempting to provide permanent job accommodation.

### **Program Monitoring:**

The injured employee should be monitored closely while on a modified work program, with any difficulties being reported and evaluated by one of the workplace supervisors. When monitoring an injured worker's participation, the following factors should be considered:

- Attendance
- Productivity
- Accuracy
- Problems with particular tasks
- Ability to increase speed
- Ability to improve efficiency

Once the worker completes his/her modified work program and returns to full duties, a complete review of the individual's modified work progress should be performed by the supervisor and the worker. Applicable recommendations for improvements made as a result of the review should be documented.

### **Consequences for Non-Compliance**

Failure of the department head or workplace supervisor to abide by this policy may result in progressive discipline, up to and including termination.

### **Policy review prior to implementation**

<b>Reviewed by:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Initial:</b>
Human Resources		
Joint Health & Safety Committee	2016-10-04	
Personnel Committee		
Department Head	2016-10-11	