

**ARTICLE: 4.0 PERSONNEL SUPPORT SERVICES**

**4.1 GENERAL PERSONNEL PRACTICES**

**4.104A RETURN-TO-WORK PROGRAM FOR  
INJURED EMPLOYEES WITH  
TEMPORARY DISABILITIES**

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**SECTION 4.104A.1 Return-to-Work Policy for Injured Employees with Temporary Disabilities**

The following principles and practices shall be utilized in implementing a Return-to-Work (RTW) program to assist all temporarily disabled individuals transition back to the workplace.

The procedures apply to individuals with medical limitations that can be accommodated with minor changes in workplace duties and to those who must convalesce at home or in a medical or rehabilitation facility. In the latter instance, the employer's representative should assist by maintaining frequent (at least biweekly) communication with the injured employee. If the injured employee expresses a willingness to accept transitional duty, the District shall respond appropriately.

**Definitions**

*Alternative Work:* Temporary transitional duty in a job other than an employee's regular position within specific physical/mental guidelines as specified by the treating physician.

*Claims Examiner or Adjuster:* An employee of a third-party firm under contract to administer and settle claims on behalf of the District.

*Eligible Employee:* An injured employee who has been cleared by the treating physician to work under conditions consistent with specified physical limitations.

*Modified Work:* Temporary transitional duty in an employee's own position in which modifications can be made to accommodate medical work restrictions. This may involve use of assistive devices or adaptive equipment, changing work processes or task design, making ergonomic changes or adjustments to workstations or equipment, and altering the scheduling, sequence, frequency, duration, or intensity of work.

*Return to Work Coordinator (RTWC):* The Director of Human Resources, or other assigned individual, who oversees the Return-to-Work Program and performs the functions outlined in this procedure.

*Return to Work Team:* Unless otherwise stated, this refers to the District's team or group responsible for developing and monitoring individual transitional duty assignments, composed of three individuals: the injured employee's supervisor, District Return-to-Work Coordinator, and Director of Risk Management. Others may consult with this team including the treating physician, physical therapist, claims examiner, and nurse case manager.

*Temporary:* For purposes of this program, it means a period beyond the date of injury not exceeding three months.

*Transitional Duty:* A general term meaning temporary work designed to accommodate an injured employee's incapacity and facilitate transition to full duty as soon as medically possible. "Modified"

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and "alternative" duty assignments are defined subsets of transitional duty. The term "light duty" is inapplicable and should not be used.

**Procedures and Roles**

The program participants noted below are expected to follow the District's RTW policy and procedures. All modified and alternative duty assignments shall be temporary and carried out in one-month increments, renewable to a maximum of three months. Assignments shorter than one month will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Renewal of 30-day increments is subject to approval by the RTWC based on the employee's ability to progress with increased work capabilities. A short extension beyond the 90-day aggregate may be permitted when justified by circumstances. Such assignments shall not be used as a means to establish new positions or displace other employees.

*Injured Employee*

(a) Collaborates with all program participants, and helps identify ways to modify the existing job within their work capabilities; (b) maintains communication with employer and claims examiner after each doctor visit and weekly by telephone in between appointments; (c) works within the parameters set by the treating physician at all times; and (d) keeps medical and therapy appointments and follows the treatment plan.

If an eligible injured employee refuses to participate in the program, he or she must forward their reasons in writing to the Return-to-Work Coordinator within ten (10) days of the offer of modified/alternative work.

*Supervisor of Injured Employee*

(a) Contacts the District's Return-to-Work Coordinator to report injuries resulting in lost work time beyond one full day and provides name, address, and telephone number of treating physician; (b) monitors employees while on transitional duty, provides reminders to work within medical restrictions, and explains the program to other employees to gain their understanding and support; (c) participates as a member of the Return-to-Work Team and cooperates with the RTWC in identifying tasks in the assigned department that are suitable for modified duty; and when appropriate, (d) maintains periodic contact with employees who are recuperating at home.

*Return-to-Work Coordinator (RTWC)*

(a) Contacts physician to confirm receipt of the employee's job description and forms entitled "Employer Instructions to Physician," and "Physician's Statement of Ability to Work," and provides these as necessary; (b) establishes a good working relationship with the employee, supervisor, treating physician, and claims examiner; (c) leads the RTW Team and meets promptly to place the eligible employee in an appropriate modified/alternative duty assignment; and (d) assures frequent contact with the employee to monitor progress and address problems.

*Director of Risk Management*

(a) Serves as a member of the RTW Team; (b) develops transitional job opportunities; (c) ensures that injured employees are oriented in temporary work assignments and have been properly trained in safety and job procedures; (d) assures that all requirements of ADA and FEHA are met; and (e) ensures that effective measures are taken to avoid further injuries.

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*Claims Examiner*

(a) Facilitates communication with and between employee, treating physician, and RTWC; (b) consults with the RTW Team; (c) assures there is no duplication of benefits and that temporary disability payments are not paid while employees are receiving full salary under a District salary continuation plan; and (d) before the 90-day point is reached, consults with the RTWC and physician concerning available strategies to get the employee back to work.

*Nurse Case Manager (if provided by the claims administrator or medical provider)*

(a) Assists with medical management of difficult and/or expensive claims, always focusing on RTW goals; (b) supports modified/alternative duties in the workplace as a less expensive substitute for "work-hardening" therapy conducted off premises; and (c) before expiration of the 90-day period following injury, discusses all viable options with the claims adjuster, treating physician, and RTWC.

SECTION 4.104A.1

Return-to-Work Policy for Injured Employees with Temporary Disabilities

POWAY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT – WORKERS’ COMPENSATION PROGRAM

13626 Twin Peaks Road, Poway, CA 92064

Telephone (858) 748-0010, Ext. 2452 / Fax (858) 486-2984

PHYSICIAN’S STATEMENT OF ABILITY TO WORK

Name of Employee School/Department Job Classification

NEXT APPOINTMENT:

Date:

Time:

WORK STATUS: Return to usual and customary occupation

Capable of modified/limited work from to

Number of days per week Number of hours per day

Unable to return to work for days

MODIFIED WORK DUTY AS INDICATED BELOW:

The School District supports a Return-to-Work Program for temporarily disabled employees consisting of modified or alternative duty. Please check those tasks this employee CAN PERFORM in a limited duty setting.

Table with columns: Object Weight, Lift, Carry, Other (CAN do these), Reaching. Rows include weight ranges (Up to 10 lbs to 41-50 lbs) and tasks like Twisting the body, Bending, Stooping, Squatting, Crawling, Pushing, Pulling, Running, Sitting, Reaching below/above shoulder level, Climbing stairs/ladders, Driving vehicles, Shoveling or digging, Speaking/conversing.

Working Conditions

Table with columns: Working Conditions, Exposure to dust, fumes, gases, Exposure to chemicals, Exposure to sunlight, Exposure to outside temperature, Keyboard work. Rows include Face-to-face public contact, Using powered equipment/machinery, Exposure to heights, Walking on rough terrain, Exposure to dampness or water.

EMPLOYEE CAN USE HANDS FOR REPETITIVE ACTIONS SUCH AS:

Table with columns: Simple Grasping, Pushing & Pulling, Fine Manipulation. Rows for Right and Left hands, each with Yes/No checkboxes.

NUMBER OF HOURS PER DAY EMPLOYEE IS CAPABLE OF:

Sitting Standing Walking

IF A DRUG IS PRESCRIBED, WILL IT AFFECT SAFE OPERATION OF A MOTOR VEHICLE? Yes No

WILL THE DRUG AFFECT OTHER DUTIES: Yes No Explain:

PHYSICIAN’S COMMENTS:

PHYSICIAN’S NAME TELEPHONE:

OFFICE ADDRESS:

PHYSICIAN’S SIGNATURE: DATE: