

Return to Work (RTW) Program Q & A

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Question 1: Why a Return to Work (RTW) Program?

Answer: The Return to Work Program is designed to help an injured or ill employee return to work as soon as they are medically able, to do meaningful and worthwhile work while they rehabilitate, and to be able to return to their original pre-injury/illness assignment. The Return to Work program follows nationally recognized return to work guidelines, allowing up to 90 days of modified or transitional work assignment. At the end of 90 days, there is a possibility of a 30 day extension, if the employee is showing progress with rehabilitation. This is reviewed on a case by case basis and requires input of the treating provider. While working a modified or temporary transitional work assignment, the employee is paid their pre-injury rate for the hours that they work.

Question 2: Who can use the RTW Program?

Answer: The RTW program will work closely with anyone on Short-Term Disability, Workers' Compensation or Long-Term to Disability to assist with a safe return to work.

Please note additional steps for employees on Long Term Disability or for those employees whom have been notified that their regular job has been replaced:

For employees on Long-Term Disability for greater than two (2) years or have received notification of job replacement, the treating provider will need to provide current work capabilities to the Leave Administration Group by fax at 585-235-6703. It will be necessary for those employees to look at the current job postings/openings online at www.rochester.edu/jobopp or to visit the Employment Center located at 910 Genesee Street, Rochester, NY 14627 to apply for positions within their current physical capabilities. Union employees will need to follow the Memorandum of Understanding in force per their union contract.

Question 3: What is the Work Accommodation Form (WAF) and where do I find it?

Answer: The Work Accommodation Form (WAF) is a document to be completed by the treating provider which will provide specific information on current physical work capabilities, such as lifting, pushing, pulling, bending and hours limitations, as well as document whether restrictions are temporary or permanent. The WAF can be found online at www.rochester.edu/working/hr/leave in the Return to Work Program box.

Question 4: **When should the treating provider complete the WAF?**

Answer: The treating physician should complete the WAF whenever there is a change in physical capabilities, such as being able to return to work with restrictions, being released to full duty from work restrictions, etc. This updated information will be used by the RTW staff to determine if current work capabilities match available temporary transitional work assignments in the home department or outside, and to monitor the employee's progress towards returning to his/her original assignment.

Question 5: **The treating provider has released the employee to return to work with or without restrictions. Who should receive the WAF / return to work note?**

Answer: The treating provider should fax the WAF / return to work note to the Return to Work Program at 585-235-6703. (If employee is on short-term disability, the WAF should also be faxed to The Hartford at the fax number located at the bottom of the WAF form received in their STD packet.) The RTW staff will provide written documentation to the employee's supervisor regarding the current restrictions and will work with the department to determine if the restrictions can be accommodated.

Question 6: **Will the employee's medical condition be kept confidential?**

Answer: Yes, only restrictions will be discussed with the supervisor/department.

Question 7: **What if the home department is unable to accommodate the written restrictions?**

Answer: The RTW staff will work with the department to determine the availability of a temporary modified transitional assignment. If no assignment is available within the home department, there may be opportunities available to place the employee outside the home department but within their current physical work capabilities. If no assignment is available, the employee will remain out of work.

Question 8: **What if the employee is unable to return to his/her regular duties at the end of the 90 day temporary modified transitional assignment?**

Answer: The 90 day temporary modified transitional assignment may possibly be extended for a short period of time, based on a case by case basis. If no extension is granted, the employee will be required to go out of work on the appropriate leave (Short-Term Disability, Workers' Compensation, or Long-Term Disability). If the restrictions become permanent, the employee will be asked to complete the **Request for Disability Accommodation Form** and will meet with their HR Business Partner, supervisor/manager, the University Intercessor-Director of Disability Compliance and a member of the Return to Work team to begin the interactive process to discuss their request and reasonable accommodations. If the permanent restrictions are such that the employee is unable to complete the essential functions of their original assignment, it may be necessary for them to change positions to an assignment where they can complete all the essential functions of the job.