



Australian Government

Comcare



# Return to Work

Assisting an employee to return to work following a work related injury or illness may not be a task with which you are familiar. Supervisors have a key role in providing a supportive workplace and ensuring open communication in the return to work process. Supervisors also perform the crucial tasks of providing suitable duties for the employee's return to work and preventing re-injury. The following steps outline the process from the supervisor's perspective<sup>1</sup>:

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- Step 1** Ensure steps are taken to prevent further injury and commence the intervention process as required by your agency's rehabilitation policy. Contact your agency's rehabilitation case manager as soon as possible.
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- Step 2** Contact the employee to:
- convey that your workplace will be supportive while they recover
  - identify the assistance that will be provided to enable a return to work when appropriate
  - advise that the case manager will be in contact to manage the return to work process soon.
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- Step 3** The case manager decides whether an assessment for a Return to Work Plan (RTWP) is required. If so, a referral is made to an approved rehabilitation provider. You should be informed of the outcome.
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- Step 4** The case manager/approved provider obtains information from you on the injured employee's pre-injury duties and, if appropriate, potential suitable duties to enable a safe and early return to work.
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- Step 5** On completion of the assessment, a decision is made on the need for a RTWP. The RTWP is developed by the case manager/rehabilitation provider in consultation with the injured employee, the treating medical practitioner and yourself. The plan identifies the goals, services, timeframes and costs. All parties need to agree to the content and goals and the case manager approves the plan.
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- Step 6** If the injured employee is to be away from the workplace for an extended period before returning to work, keep in touch. Your agency should have a policy on contacting absent staff.
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- Step 7** During implementation of the RTWP, the case manager will keep you informed of progress. If you, the employee or co-workers have any concerns, you should notify the case manager promptly. This will assist in identifying and dealing with emerging problems earlier.
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- Step 8** Once the goals of the plan are achieved, it is closed. However, you should continue to monitor the employee for a period to ensure their return to work is safe and durable, and action is taken to prevent re-injury.
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<sup>1</sup> Further information can be obtained from Rehabilitation: Managing Return to Work – A Better Practice Guide for Senior Managers and Supervisors, available on both the ANAO and Comcare web sites. [www.ANAO.gov.au](http://www.ANAO.gov.au)

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