



RETURN TO WORK POLICY

1. PURPOSE

To establish guidelines for restricted/modified duty assignment which can be made available to employees who are recovering from disabilities related to injury/illness and who are presumed to be able to return to full unrestricted duty within six months of the date the original modification is made.

2. POLICY

It is the policy of the Okaloosa County to arrange whenever possible for placement of employees that are temporarily mentally or physically disabled into alternate work assignments and to advise employees that are permanently disabled of the options available to them. It is also the policy of the Okaloosa County to administer these procedures in a fair, consistent, and equitable manner.

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1. **County Physician (aka Authorized Treating Physician)** means the physician(s) agreeing to perform workers' compensation medical service for Okaloosa County and its employees.
- 3.2. **Compensable Injury** means an injury/illness that is confirmed as resulting from an accident arising out of and in the course of the employee's employment.
- 3.3. **Off-The-Job Injury** means an injury/illness that occurred off-the-job and is not related to the employee's employment.
- 3.4. **On-The-Job Injury** means a disability resulting from an accident that arises out of and in the course of the employee's job.
- 3.5. **Restricted/Modified Duty** means modified job requirements to meet short-term disabilities as prescribed by the County contract physician.

4. ELIGIBILITY

Any full time, part-time or temporary employee who is unable to perform their regular and normal job duties due to a work related injury or illness. Inability to perform normal job duties is determined only by the authorized treating physician.

5. PROCEDURES

- 5.1. Injury -
Employee sustains an injury by accident, or illness arising out of and in the course of employment.
- 5.2. Report -
Employee reports incident causing injury to supervisor who promptly completes appropriate forms. Employee also completes First Report of Injury or Illness Form. All forms are immediately sent to Risk Management office who promptly reports claim to carrier.
- 5.3. Treatment -
Employee receives treatment from the County's physician as required by Florida Workers' Compensation Law. If injury occurs after hours, employee may seek medical attention at the closest emergency room.

6. RETURN TO WORK OPTIONS

Transitional Employment via Coordination with Treating Physician

The treating physician may determine that the employee is:

- 6.1. **Able to return to normal and regular duties with no restrictions**
If the employee is instructed by the physician to return to regular duties with no restrictions, the employee should return to work and complete the scheduled shift.
- 6.2. **Able to return to work with limitations**
If the authorized treating physician deems the employee able to return to work but with limitations, the employee will receive a physician's statement to this effect. This disability statement will list the employee's "restricted/modified duty restrictions".
- 6.3. **Unable to return to normal and regular duties, temporarily**
The authorized treating physician may determine that the employee should stay out of work for a limited period. The physician will give the employee a disability statement to this effect.
- 6.4. **Unable to return to normal and regular duties, permanently**
If possible, Okaloosa County, will make a reasonable accommodation for those employees unable to return to their normal duties.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 7.1. Employee's Responsibility:

Employee should immediately forward disability statement to supervisor.

7.2. Supervisor's Responsibility:

Supervisor will forward disability statement to Risk Management.

7.3. Risk Management Office Responsibility:

The Risk Management Office will work together with supervisor & director as necessary to place employee in a job that suits the restrictions given by the physician at the need of the department. In the case where the physician takes the employee out of work for a limited period, Risk Management office will contact physician and ask – “what is employee capable of doing.” Risk Management office will coordinate with employee's supervisor as necessary to identify a job that suits the physician's description of employee's job capabilities.

8. **JOB AVAILABILITY**

Jobs for Transitional Employment will be identified and employee placed and in the following order:

- 8.1. Modify current job to accommodate the restrictions given by physician.
- 8.2. Identify another job within the department.
- 8.3. Identify job within another division of the employee's department.
- 8.4. Identify job within any other department within Okaloosa County.

9. **WORK STANDARDS**

- 9.1. An employee on transitional employment is subject to all rules, regulations, work standards, policies and procedures of Okaloosa County.
- 9.2. Employees on restricted/modified duty are required to follow the policies and procedures of the department to which they are assigned.
- 9.3. If the employee is placed on restricted/modified duty outside his/her normal work area, the reporting supervisor is responsible for assuring that actual hours worked, leave taken, etc., are reported to the employee's supervisor.
- 9.4. Work assigned on transitional employment must be done in an acceptable manner and meet the requirements of the job.
- 9.5. Unsatisfactory performance during transitional employment will be addressed as any other type of performance problem.

10. **EMPLOYEE AVAILABILITY**

Employees on restricted duty must hold themselves available for any and all work fitting their medical restrictions. This includes jobs in another department or division, and hours that may vary from their regular work schedule.

11. **EMPLOYEE REFUSAL OF TRANSITIONAL EMPLOYMENT**

In the event an employee refuses to return to transitional employment in response to a written, bona fide job offer which is approved by the authorized treating physician, the rights to workers' compensation income benefits will be suspended.

12. **EMPLOYEE REFUSAL TO RETURN TO REGULAR AND NORMAL DUTY**

In the event an employee refuses to return to regular duty after being approved by the authorized treating physician to do so, employee will be referred to the department director and Human Resources Director for disciplinary actions in accordance with Okaloosa County's Human Resources rules and regulations.

13. **RESTRICTED/MODIFIED DUTY PLACEMENT FOR OFF-THE-JOB INJURIES**

13.1. At the discretion of the director, requests for restricted/modified duty assignments for employees who receive off-the-job injuries/illnesses can be arranged within their work center. The director will determine if there is acceptable vacancies available meeting the posted restriction criteria of the injured/ill employee and comply accordingly. If none are available, the injured/ill employee must use sick leave, vacation leave, or leave without pay until such time the employee has been released to full duty by his/her attending physician.

NOTE

There is no mandatory requirement to place employees recovering from off-the-job injuries/illnesses into any restricted/modified duty program. Due to the limited available positions in each department, restricted/modified duty assignments will not always be available. The County reserves the right to make the final determination as to the conditions under which such positions are made available and for how long a person may occupy such as position.

13.2. If the director does not approve the restricted/modified duty request, employees must use sick leave, vacation leave, compensation leave, or leave without pay if no other leave exists.