

TRANSITIONAL WORK PROGRAM

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

**OHIO DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL RETARDATION
AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES**

DIVISION OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Transitional Work Program

Goal

Provide employees of the Ohio Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, who are injured or temporarily disabled, the opportunity to safely return to work at their original position performing the essential duties of their job as soon as possible.

Objectives

1. Reduce the economic and personal impact of disability to employees and to improve the working conditions of employees who suffer a temporary disability
2. Refer and encourage all employees with work-prohibitive injury or illness to consider the services of vocational rehabilitation
3. Improve the personal communication by the Employer and the Union to the injured worker by informing him/her of the programs and benefits available
4. Provide information regarding the proper procedure for filing workers' compensation, Occupational Injury Leave and disability claims
5. Reduce the number of employees who are temporarily totally disabled and reduce the number of employees who may become permanently totally disabled, under the provisions of workers' compensation
6. Reduce the cost of workers' compensation and disability claims to the Ohio Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities

Transitional Work Procedure

1. Employee sustains an injury or illness that prevents them from performing their regular job.

For work-related injuries:

Employee reports the injury promptly to the supervisor on duty, following the Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities employee accident reporting procedure.

The Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Human Resources Department processes worker's compensation and Occupational Injury Leave claims. The Transitional Work Program (TWP) Coordinator will forward a Transitional Work Program informational package to the employee upon receipt of an accident report where the injury/illness requires the employee to seek medical treatment.

For other injuries/illnesses:

The TWP Coordinator is notified of a request for an extended leave of absence for medical reasons.

2. A Vocational Rehabilitation Case Manager prepares a copy of the Job Analysis form.
3. The employee, the supervisor, the TWP Coordinator, a member of the Transitional Work Committee and the Case Manager review the job analysis.
4. The TWP Coordinator will forward the job analysis and position description to the employee's attending physician in order to determine which duties the employee is able to perform safely.
5. The attending physician will be asked to review the job analysis and provide restrictions for the employee and a date when the employee may return to work.
6. The Case Manager reviews the attending physician's report with TWP Coordinator and a member of the Transitional Work Committee in order to determine whether the employee will be able to participate in the Transitional Work Program.
7. The Case Manager will coordinate the transitional work assignment (work schedule, type of position, duties, progress to original job duties, etc.) with the TWP Coordinator, the attending physician, the employee, the immediate supervisor and a member of the Transitional Work Committee.

The Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Health & Safety Committee will be advised of the transitional work assignment.

8. An employee who enters the Transitional Work Program will be assigned to either:
 - a. Their original job, with modified duties, or
 - b. An unrelated job, with physically appropriate duties
9. The employee's performance will be reviewed by the supervisor during the transitional work assignment, in communication with the TWP Coordinator. This will assist in determining whether the employee has progressed as expected.

The evaluation will be conducted biweekly or more often if appropriate.

A copy of the evaluation will be shared with the Transitional Work Committee in order to receive comments and recommendations.

10. The final evaluation of the transitional work assignment is performed by the TWP Coordinator, the supervisor, a member of the Transitional Work Committee, and the Human Resources designee in consultation with the Case Manager.
11. The options available under this program are:
 - a. An initial transitional work assignment, for up to two (2) pay periods.
 - b. The transitional work assignment may then be extended for two (2) pay periods. In extenuating circumstances, an additional extension may be made for two (2) pay periods.
 - c. Upon the completion of the program and with the written approval of the employee's physician, the employee returns to his/her position and duties.
 - d. An employee who is not physically able to return to his/her position will be referred back to their Vocational Rehabilitation Program for additional services as appropriate.

Note: Participation in the Transitional Work Program is mandatory to the injured employee upon the release by the employee's attending physician to participate in a transitional work assignment.

Job Analysis Procedure

Purpose

Job analysis is the determination of essential functions of a particular job. This provides the TWP Coordinator, the employee's attending physician, and immediate supervisor the proper information in determining which job duties can and can not be performed by the employee.

Procedure

1. The TWP Coordinator prepares the supporting documentation for the job analysis
2. The TWP Coordinator reviews the current position description with the employee's immediate supervisor and a member of the Transitional Work Committee
3. The TWP Coordinator will prepare the list of the essential job functions of the position in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
4. The essential job functions and position description are forwarded to the Vocational Rehabilitation Case Manager
5. The Vocational Rehabilitation Case Manager will assist in preparing the job analysis
6. Informational copies of the job analysis are sent to:
 - a. Transitional Work Committee,
 - b. The employee's workers' compensation or disability file, and
 - c. The employee's immediate supervisor

Vocational Rehabilitation Process

1. The Rehabilitation Program receives the referral of the injured/disabled employee and assigns a Case Manager
2. The Case Manager reviews the job analysis and the employee's position description
3. The Case Manager contacts the injured employee to:
 - a. Review what rehabilitation is and what services are available
 - b. Review the employee's medical status
 - c. Schedule an intake interview
4. The Case Manager conducts the intake interview
5. The Case Manager contacts the TWP Coordinator and the employee's attending physician in order to relay information regarding the employee's position description and job analysis

The Case Manager will obtain any additional records needed, the physician's recommendation (prescription) for rehabilitation, and the physician's authorization and agreement with the rehabilitation program

6. The Case Manager performs a pre-program evaluation if indicated
7. The Case Manager plans the implementation and completion of the Rehabilitation Program
8. The Case Manager coordinates the employee's return to work and the implementation of the transitional work assignment
9. The employee returns to a vocational rehabilitation program if he/she is unable to return to his/her original position
10. The Case Manager reviews alternative placement with the original or other employer based upon a placement hierarchy

Transitional Work Information Package to Employees

Purpose

The purpose of this packet is to provide employees and their doctors with information regarding the Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Transitional Work Program (TWP). Our objective is to keep in contact with all injured/disabled employees. This will allow both management and employees to be properly informed of the progress and issues that are relevant to the employee's injury status. This will assist the injured/disabled employee in his or her return to work and to their original physical condition as soon as possible.

Primary Responsibility

The primary responsibility for the administration of these programs is assigned to the Human Resources Department of the Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.

Procedure

1. An employee sustains an injury or is disabled due to an illness, and is unable to perform their regular job duties

Note: For work-related injuries or illnesses, the employee will follow MRDD's Accident Reporting Procedures.

2. The TWP Coordinator is either notified of a potential TWP participant by Employee Accident Report for work-related injuries/illnesses, or by request for extended leave for medical reasons for all other injuries/illnesses.
3. The TWP Coordinator delivers the Transitional Work Packet to the employee

The packet includes:

- Letter to employee from MRDD Human Resources regarding TWP
- Letter to employee from MRDD Transitional Work Committee regarding TWP
- Letter to medical provider from MRDD Transitional Work Committee regarding TWP
- Informational brochure detailing options for employee

Note: When possible, the information will be delivered personally to the injured employee. Otherwise, it will be mailed

4. The employee returns to the human resources designee the completed appropriate forms as soon as possible.

Note: For work-related injuries, this should be done before leaving work whenever possible.

Sample letter from Human Resources (on MRDD letterhead)

Dear:

I am sorry to hear that you are unable to work. Your complete and timely recovery is important to us (and to your co-workers). We want to provide you with the appropriate assistance and information.

If your injury is work-related, the Bureau of Workers' Compensation will cover your claim. You have already received instructions on the procedure to follow if you are injured at work. Any questions should be directed to _____.

If your injury did not occur in the course of your employment, you may be eligible to file for short-term disability benefits. You may contact _____, regarding applying for this benefit.

Your case will be assigned to a Vocational Rehabilitation Case Manager. This individual will work with you and your doctor in your recovery efforts and will explain all options available to you for returning to your job as soon as you are physically able to do so.

The Department of Mental Retardation together with the unions has developed a Transitional Work Program. This program will allow you to return to the work environment and gradually transition back into your regular job. This program will allow you to return to:

- a. Your original job, with full or temporarily modified duties, or
- b. A different job, temporarily, with physically appropriate duties

The program will allow you to work in a transitional work assignment for two (2) to six (6) pay periods in order to assist your return to your regular duties.

During the period of time your injury prevents you from returning to work, you must keep the Transitional Work Program Coordinator informed of your condition and your estimated date to return to work. You are required to make personal or telephone contact at least every two weeks to provide an update. He/she can be reached in the Human Resources Department. This contact does not take the place of timely submission of Requests for Leave or other requirements expressed by MRDD policies.

We will contact your doctor to determine your return to work status. You have several options available to you, if your injury prevents you from returning to work. The options are outlined in the enclosed attachments.

If you have any questions or problems, please contact the Transitional Work Program Coordinator at _____.

Sincerely,

Sample letter from Transitional Work Committee (on MRDD letterhead)

Dear:

We are very sorry to hear of your injury. We are available to help you in any way we can. If you need answers to general questions or help with claim forms, please contact Human Resources.

We would like you to know about the Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Transitional Work Program. Formerly, injured or temporarily disabled employees were not allowed to return to work until they were able to return without physical restrictions. The Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities and the unions recognized that many employees would prefer to return to work if their temporary physical restriction could be accommodated. Consequently, the Transitional Work Program was developed.

You have several options available to you if your injury prevents you from returning to work. These are all outlined in the enclosed attachments.

We want you to know that this program is available and hope your physician will allow you to participate. Payments from the Bureau of Workers' Compensation and the State of Ohio Disability Fund do not usually last forever – the sooner you get back on your feet, the less likely you are to suffer a reduction in your pay. Statistics show that the earlier an injured employee returns to work the quicker their recovery.

If you have any questions, please call _____.

Good luck with your recovery!

Sample letter to attending physician (on MRDD letterhead)

Dear Medical Provider:

We would like to acquaint you with the Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (MRDD) Transitional Work Program (TWP).

What is transitional work?

An employee who is injured or disabled first obtains appropriate medical care. MRDD's TWP Committee then contacts you, the medical provider, to obtain information concerning the employee's capabilities. Specifically, what portions of the regular job can the employee not perform as a result of the injury? Based on the information you provide about needed modification to the employee's job duties, the Transitional Work Program Committee will develop a modified duty assignment. We will then ask you to release the employee to this assignment.

The transitional work assignment is temporary. The goal is to assist the employee in their recovery while remaining in the work environment, performing productive, meaningful work. The program was developed with the help of rehabilitation professionals at the Bureau of Workers' Compensation. While participating, the employee undergoes continual monitoring and evaluation to assure safe progress in returning to full duty.

Advantages for your patient:

Transitional Work...

- Eliminates the sometimes devastating effects of long-term disability; after 1 year off work, only 50% of injured workers ever return to the work force (many must resort to public assistance), 85% claim additional disabling conditions, and 66% of those who are married become divorced **,
- Eliminates delayed and reduced pay: employees in MRDD's transitional work program earn their regular rate of pay,
- Speeds the recovery process,
- Enables the employee to participate in any needed rehabilitation program, usually at full pay.

(**Statistics provided by the Bureau of Workers' Compensation)

We are eager to return our employee, your patient, to the work environment as quickly as is safely possible. Given the size of our facility and the diverse job duties performed, we have thus far been able to develop a transitional assignment for every employee who has needed one. Initially, the program was developed for work-related injuries. Based on its success, the program has expanded to include all injuries and disabling conditions. We are pleased to be able to offer this program to our employees.

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about our Transitional Work Program. If you have any questions about the program or would like more information on transitional work in general, please do not hesitate to contact the program coordinator, _____.

Sincerely,

Transitional Work Program Committee