



Press Release

For Immediate Release

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NYCM Announces Development of Comprehensive Transitional Return to Work Product! A Similar Program Can Benefit Your Business.

Has your business suffered in the past as a result of an employee being out of work due to injury? Did the incident negatively impact your workers' compensation rates? New York Compensation Managers is changing the way employees think and feel about returning to work following an injury, and it is benefiting employers. Mark Balduzzi, NYCM Safety and Loss Control Specialist says, "the most significant costs associated with workers' compensation injuries are not insurable - business interruption can drain resources and assets and negatively affect a company's bottom line."

NYCM has developed a new program known as SHAPE (**S**avings **H**appen **A**mongst **P**roactive **E**mployers), which is a redesigned and simplified Transitional Return to Work (TRTW) program. Active participation in a similar program by businesses will help the business reduce claim costs and safely return employees back to meaningful employment!

A common question asked by employers is... What are alternative work assignments and job modifications? **Alternative work assignments** are necessary when current restrictions prevent the worker from performing the original job, and the employee performs a different job for a temporary period. **Job modifications** enable the injured worker to perform **some version** of the original job, but with changes meeting currently identified restrictions.

Why is it so important to get an injured employee back to work? The Menninger Foundation, a medical research center in Topeka, Kansas has data that clearly shows the longer a worker stays away from the workplace, the greater chance he or she will **never** return. The study shows that there is a 60 day window for workers to return to work. After that a significant number never return. Over time workers can develop "disability dependence"- a mindset of being sick. A quick return-to-work, even with modified duty, is much better for the employee. The employee recovers more quickly, is less apt to get out of shape, is able to maintain wage stability, and stays connected to the workplace.

Transitional Return-to-Work (TRTW) programs are based on the philosophy that many employees can safely perform productive work during the process of recovery. Active participation in a TRTW program benefits everyone. Director of Nurse Case Management for NYCM, Dee Brown says, "waiting until they are 100%... will only continue indemnity payments, increase medical costs through continued treatment utilization, and lessen the chance that the injured worker will ever return-to-work. Injured workers out of work for more than 2 years have a less than 2% chance of ever returning!!!"

Benefits of TRTW Program for Employers

- Returning an experienced employee to work in a safe and timely manner
- Reducing the cost of training replacement workers
- Maintaining a good employer and employee relationship
- Demonstrating to all workers that they are valued employees
- Reducing the length of time your employee is away from the work site

Benefits of TRTW Program for Employees

- Impact of financial uncertainty on the employee and their family, and concerns about the future with your company are reduced
- Faster Recovery - Physical Wellness = Mental Wellness
- A maintained sense of attachment with their co-workers

"Frequency and severity can both impact a company's experience factor used by the insurance industry and state regulators to calculate insurance premium costs and impose surcharges that can drain business resources. Effective RTW has been proven to lower total claim costs and thus reduce the impact of any negative experience which creates more insurance options for the business owners," says Mark Balduzzi.

NYCM's SHAPE product has been in development for several months and constructed with "Best Practice" in mind in order to help take the guesswork out of establishing a TRTW program and actually *putting it in practice*. NYCM surveyed the most frequently cited reasons why their self-insurance trust members failed to implement TRTW and worked to eliminate these impediments.

TRTW has been daunting for many businesses to comprehend and to implement and the compelling reasons to do so have not been communicated well enough. Available RTW programs have had limited success because of these difficulties and the fact that there was no push to get it done. "In the past, we were finding that businesses would have to "recreate the wheel" each time a claim was filed to explore TRTW potential – this was simply inefficient!" says Dee Brown, Director of Nurse Case Management for NYCM.

There is some misconception as to whose responsibility it is to control TRTW. Best Practice dictates that is incumbent upon the **employer** to take ownership and control in this process. NYCM's **SHAPE** program makes it happen by helping put that control back where it belongs – with the employer.

There are a few variables needed to help make any transitional duty program successful. The key to success is **involving everyone** and making transitional duty a **team effort**. Follow up is also an important key to making the program a success. Stay in contact with the employee daily and identify an injury coordinator to ensure that restrictions under which the employee is to be working are maintained. Emphasis must be placed on compliance regarding all restrictions to prevent re-injury. An important component of your program is also to insist that employees on restrictive duty follow up with their provider every few weeks to monitor their progress.



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Balduzzi says, “The sophistication of your company’s RTW program is determined by your business profile - each one is different but no less important when considering part or all of a RTW Program. The five component steps to any return-to-work program that should be implemented for it to be successful include: Written Policy, Supervisory Training, Employee Education, Medical Care Guidelines, and Transitional Duty Job Opportunities.”

While prevention is ultimately the key to not having *any* workers’ compensation claims, even the best laid plans can falter and being able to effectively and efficiently deal with the consequences after any accident is essential to any well run business. NYCM urges businesses to get involved and take an active roll with their transitional duty program.

Lost time and disability can account for over 50% of each work related injury claim cost. Higher claim costs effects the premiums your business pays for workers’ compensation insurance. Used in conjunction with sound loss prevention practices, businesses can realize considerable savings in both direct and indirect costs associated with work related injuries.

For additional information on the SHAPE program created by NYCM please contact one of the following employees...

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