

Returning to Work After an Injury



After a person experiences an injury and has taken time off work to recover, he or she will need to go through a transition period when first returning to work. Transitional work is a step in the recovery process when a person is able to complete some job tasks but is not yet at full capacity. A transitional work program includes job coaching, instruction, and education in safe work practices to prevent further injury. The program usually includes a combination of job tasks that a worker is able to perform safely.

An occupational therapist trained in return-to-work services can evaluate a person's ability to complete his or her job tasks and oversee a company's return-to-work program. The goal of occupational therapy is to provide the returning worker with tasks that are meaningful and to facilitate the worker's complete and total independence and function at work. A transitional work program also allows for the use of environmentally focused interventions that incorporate good, healthy ergonomic practices.

What can an occupational therapist do?

- **Evaluate** a person while on the job to determine his or her ability to complete job tasks.
- **Recommend** modifications to job tasks that the worker can complete safely.
- **Identify** a worker's meaningful job tasks.
- **Implement** and supervise a company's return-to-work program to ensure a safe, productive, and functional work environment.
- **Monitor** a worker's progress regularly and reassess to determine when work tasks can be upgraded to full duty.

What can a person returning to work do?

- **Do not overestimate** his or her ability and capacity to complete job tasks.
- **Complete** tasks gradually on the advice of an occupational therapist, health care professionals, and the employer.
- **Implement** the use of assistive devices that may help a person complete a task safely.
- **Develop** strength and endurance in performing job tasks.

Need more information?

A return-to-work program that includes transitional work for employees is an important component of a company's healthy work environment. If you would like to consult an occupational therapist about transitional work, practitioners are available through most hospitals, community clinics, and medical centers.

with a broad range of physical, developmental, and psychological conditions. Practitioners also help clients and their caregivers with strategies that can prevent injury and secondary complications, and support health and well-being. Contact your local health organization for more information.

Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants are trained in helping both adults and children

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