Employee Return -To -Work Program
# Employee Return -To - Work Program

## Administrative Procedures

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What Is the Return To Work Program?
PROGRAM INTRODUCTION

Superintendent’s Message

The New Hanover County School System is committed to the safety and welfare of all employees. Nevertheless, we realize that with our best efforts to create a safe working environment, injuries or illnesses will still occur in the workplace.

Therefore, we believe that New Hanover County School System has a responsibility to return employees with work related injuries and illnesses to their normal jobs as quickly as medically possible. To meet this responsibility to our employees, we are implementing the Return to Work Program. This program consists of specific administrative procedures outlining the role of the employee and the role of the employer in making sure that an employee has every opportunity to return to work after a job related illness or injury. These procedures will be an important part of the Workers’ Compensation Program. We will make every effort to create a bridge to assist in the employee’s effort toward full recovery and return to full duty.

The New Hanover County School System Administration fully endorses the Administrative Procedures for the Return to Work Transition Program, and solicits the cooperation of all employees to provide the necessary support to our injured employees.
Purpose and Objectives

Program Purpose

The purpose of this program is to develop a system for returning employees to work quickly and safely after a work related injury or illness and to improve the identification and appropriate management of temporary and permanent disabilities.

Objectives

1. Support employees in their recovery from injury or illness by providing modified or alternative work assignments.

2. Minimize the amount of absence and resulting impact to both the employee and the organization due to work related injuries and illness.

3. Help restore employees to the highest level of physical and mental health possible in a shorter period of time by implementing temporary, or transitional work positions, approved for the employee’s particular medical condition.

4. Provide early education and awareness training on the Return to Work Transitional program during orientation, and at faculty and departmental meetings.

5. Return the employees to their regular job assignment as soon as medically possible.
PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

When an employee of the New Hanover County School System sustains a work-related injury or illness which is compensable under current workers’ compensation legislation and the treating physician releases the employee to return to work with temporary restrictions which preclude the injured employee from performing his or her regular job duties, the system will make all reasonable efforts to enable the employee to return to work within the temporary, physician-imposed physical restrictions.

Return to Work Program Coordinator:

The Safety Director for New Hanover County Schools will serve as the Return to Work Program Coordinator. The Return to Work Program Coordinator shall be responsible for administering the Administrative Procedures established through this policy.

The duties of the program coordinator shall include but are not limited to the following:

1. Prepare training materials for the organization.

2. Conduct employee training relative to transitional duty as necessary.

3. Responsible for an inventory of all work related injuries and illnesses.

4. Maintain effective communications with all parties involved in a workers’ compensation claim. This will include but not be limited to the following: employee, supervisor(s), medical care provider(s), insurance representative(s) and administrative personnel.

5. Work closely with members of the Return to Work Committee in the review of transitional duty cases. Each review will occur no later than 90 days from the date the employee returns to work.

6. Coordinate the timely implementation of transitional duty assignments.
7. Establish a working list of potential transitional duty assignments.

8. Return the injured employee to his/her regular job assignment when a physician releases him/her to return to full duty.

9. Keep members of the Return to Work Committee informed of any changes or modifications in work restrictions of employees participating in the transitional duty program.

**EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES**

All employees of the New Hanover County School System have designated responsibilities including:

1. An employee must report any work related injury or illness to the employee’s supervisor immediately following the incident in writing.

2. Following a work related injury the employee must provide a written description of any directed physician findings. If the employee is seen by a physician during normal working hours the employee must report back to work after receiving medical treatment, unless otherwise instructed by the attending physician or the employee’s supervisor.

3. If a physician sees the employee after normal working hours, the employee must report to work the day after the injury at his/her normal reporting time unless otherwise instructed by the attending physician or employee’s supervisor.

4. The employee must follow the physical restrictions imposed by the treating physician. If the physician has not released the employee to return to work. It is the employees responsibility to contact his/her supervisor immediately.

5. The employee must report any change in temporary physician imposed physical restrictions (in writing) to his/her supervisor and the Return to Work Coordinator immediately upon gaining knowledge of such changes in physician imposed restrictions.
SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Under this program, a supervisor of the New Hanover County School System has certain responsibilities. They include:

1. It shall be the responsibility of each supervisor to ensure that all employees receive proper training on the Return to Work Program.

2. The supervisor should obtain a written statement from the employee describing the job related injury/illness and how it occurred.

3. When an employee is away from work due to an injury or illness, the supervisor will maintain an open line of communication with the employee. The employee should be contacted regularly while they are away from the worksite. In addition, an employee with physician imposed restrictions at the worksite should be contacted regularly for condition updates.

4. Supervisors must assist the Return to Work Coordinator in identifying appropriate transitional work assignments for employees who, after injury, have been returned to work with restrictions.

5. Supervisors must ensure that an employee does not, under any circumstances return to work until the treating physician releases him/her.

6. After an employee’s return to work, supervisors must ensure restrictions are not violated.

7. Supervisors must keep the Return to Work Coordinator informed of the status, condition and progress of all employees assigned to transitional duties.
TRANSITIONAL DUTY

Return to Work Committee

The Return to Work Transition Program requires a special Return to Work Committee. This committee is responsible for reviewing and making specific recommendations regarding Employee Return to Work Cases. The committee members will confidentially review all information relative to individual cases of employee injury/Illness and determine the most appropriate placement of employees into transitional duty positions (if possible given the circumstances surrounding each case). This committee will also assist the Program Coordinator in creating a list of transitional duty positions that can be available for future use.

The Return to Work Committee shall consist of the following positions, or designees as well as others that may be assigned by the Superintendent:

Return to Work Coordinator (Group Facilitator)  
Assistant Superintendent of Operations  
Assistant Superintendent Human Resources  
Finance Officer or Representative  
Health and Benefits Representative  
Supervisor of the Injured Employee (Changes with employee)  
Human Resource Department Office Support (Clerical Support)

Return to Work Coordinator/Return to Work Committee Actions

1. After receiving notification of an employee’s release by the treating physician for transitional duty placement, the Return to Work Coordinator will review a list of possible transitional duty positions and forward relative information about the case and the potential transitional duty jobs to the Return to Work Committee members.

2. The Return to Work Coordinator shall convene a meeting of the Return to Work Committee as necessary to review individual cases of employee injury and
determine the feasibility of placement within transitional duty positions.

3. Following a decision by the Return to Work Committee on placement of an employee or in a transitional work position, the Return to Work Coordinator shall brief the injured employee on the elements of both the Return to Work / Transitional Duty Program, as well as the specific transitional duty position proposed for the injured employee. Employee’s questions shall be answered by the Return to Work Coordinator at this time.

**Employee Choice**

The Return to Work Coordinator shall brief the employee on the assigned transitional duty position. At that time, the employee shall be given no more than three (3) business days to make a decision on acceptance of the transitional duty position assigned by the Return to Work Committee and approved by the attending physician.

The employee may, at his/her discretion refuse to accept the assigned transitional duty position. If the employee accepts the position, all necessary worksite accommodations shall be made and the employee shall return to work.

If the employee refuses the position, the claims adjuster of the New Hanover County Schools Workers’ Compensation Insurance Carrier will be directed to file an application (Form 24) with the Industrial Commission of the State of North Carolina to have compensation terminated. Compensation will be paid until the Industrial Commission gives approval for termination.

The employee is required to acknowledge the refusal of transitional duty by completing and signing a Transitional Duty Form. The statement shall include specific information concerning the transitional duty which was offered to the employee, the date of the offer, and that the employee voluntarily declined the transitional duty with the full and complete understanding that workers compensation payments may be affected.
If efforts to contact an employee fail, a certified letter shall be mailed to the home address of the employee. The letter shall state information concerning the medically approved transitional duty, the rate of pay assigned to the transitional duty and an expected return to work date. If the employee fails to return to work within (2) two working days of the designated return to work date, the employee’s refusal to return shall be considered a refusal of the offer of transitional work duty.

The Return to Work Coordinator shall keep members of the Return to Work Committee informed of any changes or modifications in work restrictions of employees in the transitional duty program. The committee will meet when necessary to review changes, and modify assigned transitional duty position descriptions as necessary due to medical or other reasons.

Wage Compensation

When the employee returns to work full time but with medical restrictions, he or she will receive compensation at his/her regular salary rate. If an employee has limited work hours, he or she will receive regular salary for the hours worked and receive workers’ compensation benefits for the remaining hours that make up the workday. The amount of workers’ compensation is based on sixty-six and two thirds percent (66 2/3%) of the average wages earned during the past 12 months.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

All employees will be trained in the content of the Return to Work Program and shall receive a copy of the policy guidelines upon their employment with the New Hanover County School System. This training will be provided to all new employees upon initial employment, and to all affected employees when there have been changes to the content of the program.

It shall be the responsibility of the Return to Work Coordinator to prepare training materials. It shall be the responsibility of each supervisor to ensure that all employees receive proper training on the Return to Work Program.
New Hanover County Schools
Return to Work Transition Program Registration Form

Employee Name: ________________________________________________________

School/ Department: ______________________________________________________

Type of Injury: _________________________ Date of Injury/Illness: _______________

___ I will accept the Transitional Duty Assignment at ________________
and agree to perform the Transitional Job Description as assigned. (The transitional
job description has been approved by your attending physician.)

___ I will not accept the Transitional Duty assignment that has been offered by the
Transitional Program Coordinator. Explain the reason for your rejection.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Signature __________________________________ Date ____________________________
Return to Work Transition Program

Assignment Form

Transitional Assignment Reporting Date: ________________________________

Transitional Employee Name: __________________________________________

Transitional Employee Department: _________________________________

Location of the Transitional Assignment: ___________________________

Supervisor of the Department: _____________________________________

Scheduled Work Hours: _____________________________________________

Specific Medical Restrictions: ______________________________________

Transitional Assignment Period (Dates) __________________ Through ____________

________________________________________ ___________________________

Transitional Coordinator: Signature Date
Time away from work due to an injury or illness can be difficult and unsettling. With this in mind, the New Hanover County School District has developed a special program to assist you in regaining your health and returning to work full time. This program, called Return to Work Transitional Program, is specifically designed to ease the pivotal period from recovery to full-time job duties.

Why am I receiving this guide?
Your employer values you as an employee. It would be helpful to your recovery if you were to return to work performing what is called Transitional Job Duties. Please take a few minutes to read this guide. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to speak to your supervisor, medical doctor or Return to Work Coordinator.

What Are Transitional Job Duties?
Transitional Job Duties are the use of an enhanced work tasks which fit your current physical limitations to help you recover until you can return to your full job duties. It will help you to recover more quickly and completely.

How Are Transitional Job Duties helpful to me?
In many cases, injured or ill workers can remain at work during their recovery period. When you stay at work through transitional job duties, you return to your regular job sooner, maintain communication with your employer and co-workers, and also maintain financial security.

Is recovery at home an option?
For an employee whose injury/illness prohibits job performance at any level, home recovery would be advised. However, Transitional Job Duties are offered to all employees and is considered a viable option during the recovery process. When you remain at home too long, lack of daily exercise and activity tends to wear down general muscle tone and fitness. This may increase the likelihood of re-injury when you return to full duty.

Transitional Job Duties make up the bridge that transitions you from recovering at home to returning you to your regular job duties. An evaluation from your treating physician will determine your physical capabilities and serve as a basis for establishing your modified duties.

Should I be concerned about re-injury?
A Transitional Job Duties plan is designed with your health interests as the top priority. This plan includes approvals and recommendations from your treating
physician. Through careful monitoring of physical limitations, the chance of reinjury becomes less of a health risk than staying at home completely. Your recovery can actually be expedited through Transitional Job Duties, which allows you to gradually build up your strength and remain active - two key components of the recovery process.

**What about my medical treatment?**
Your medical treatment will continue as prescribed by your treating physician. Transitional Job Duties are part of your regular medical treatment. An important point to remember is that Transitional Job Duties are tailored to your specific physical needs and, therefore, any medications, medical procedures, physical/occupational therapy and/or follow-up visits will remain intact as advised by your treating physician. Transitional Job Duties will not interfere with your medical treatment, but rather is designed to aid you during the recovery process.

**When should a worker be referred for the Return-to-Work Transitional Program?**
When an employee's job can not be modified to accommodate his/her physical restrictions. The transitional duty period will last until you receive medical clearance from your attending physician to resume your normal duties.

**How long does Transitional Job Duties last?**
The length of Transitional Job Duties is different for each person. You and your treating physician should discuss your expectations and goals, which focuses on remaining productive and getting better. You, your employer, your physician along with your Claim or Medical Professional will make up your recovery team, which determines your expected length of the Transitional Job Duties.

**What happens if medical changes occur?**
If your medical status changes during the Transitional Job Duties period, your assignment will be reassessed. Contact your treating physician as soon as you notice any changes to your condition. Your employer will work with your treating physician's recommendations and make appropriate adjustments. Again, this program is designed, specifically, to adjust your regular job duties to your physical capabilities.

**Transitional Job Duties involve:**
Creating a personalized, monitored plan based upon your physical limitations as a result of your work-related injury. A set of temporary, enhanced job tasks and assignments in line with your physical capabilities are created to uniquely meet your physical capabilities.

**You are the most important member of your return-to-work team.**
Your supervisor or Return to Work Coordinator is ready to discuss additional questions and concerns you may have regarding assignment options, duty
descriptions and time frames. Call them for assistance in enrolling in the Return-to-Work Transitional Program today.

Focus on remaining productive and getting better. Let your treating physician know of any problems or changes in your condition. Give Transitional Job Duties a chance to work for you.

For further information, please contact the Return to Work Coordinator at (254-4275).