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PURPOSE

To facilitate the timely and successful return to work for employees who have been absent due to illness or injury.

DEFINITIONS

- Accommodation** The changing of work or work methods in order to permit an employee to return to his/her position.
- Non standard RTW** An employee is able to return to work but unable to return to his/her position after an illness or injury.
- Occupational injury** Any injury such as a cut, fracture, sprain, amputation, etc., which results from a work-related event or from a single instantaneous exposure in the work environment. An injury that occurs in the course of work or a health impairment caused by conditions in the work environment.
- Standard RTW** An employee is able to return to his/her previous job responsibilities after illness or injury.
- Supervisor** A person who has charge of a workplace or authority over any worker.

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Confidentiality

The college is committed to protecting the confidentiality of the employee medical and personal information. The benefits administrator will make the employee aware of when and how, and for what purpose information is shared, as well as reinforcing the employee's rights and responsibilities regarding confidentiality.

In order to ensure timely return to work planning, the College requires information about an employee's abilities and limitations which are collected from the relevant treating physician or through a 3rd party (insurer or WSIB). The benefits administrator is responsible for overseeing the safekeeping and protection of confidential information.

Records of personal medical information are kept confidential and separate from employee human resources files.

Employee health information is gathered through a process of informed written consent from the employee.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Benefits Administrator

Maintain appropriate contact with the employee, the supervisor, and the union representative.

Ensure the employee understands the procedures and responsibilities.

Consult with the employee; union or association; supervisor; Director, Human Resources, treating physician; on abilities/restrictions, job demands and timing of return to work.

Develop a return to work plan and job match when an employee cannot return to pre-illness job.

Lead the return to work process by meeting with the employee, supervisor, union representative, 3rd party representative to communicate, support, and implement the plan.

Employee

Maintain appropriate contact with supervisor and benefits administrator throughout the absence.

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Focus on recovery and obtain appropriate medical treatment.

Provide medical documentation and any additional information necessary for return to work planning.

Participate in identifying return to work options.

Participate in abilities assessment, if required.

Supervisor

Maintain appropriate contact with employee.

Identify return to work options within the department based on the returning employee's abilities and limitations.

Support the employee in the implementation of the return to work plan.

Union Representative

Represent employees.

Assist employee in understanding procedures and his/her responsibilities regarding the return to work plan.

Participate in return to work meeting with benefits administrator, employee, supervisor, and 3rd party representative.

Human Resources

Oversee the day to day functioning of the return to work program.

Ensure consistency of application.

Ensure appropriate training for staff.

Ensure appropriate general communication about the return to work program.

Senior Management

Allocate resources as required.

Provide assistance with inter/intra-departmental transitional work and placements.

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Employee’s Health Care Provider(s)

Manage and treat employee’s illness or injury.

Support the employee in return to work efforts.

Provide abilities and limitations information.

RETURN TO WORK PROCESS

Reporting of Absence to Supervisor

Employees are required to report to their immediate supervisor, at or before the beginning of their regularly scheduled shift, their inability to attend work due to illness. Employees who will be absent from work for more than one day are required to call their immediate supervisor each day of absence.

Employees who are absent for three or more consecutive days are required to provide a doctor’s note upon return to work.

Medical Documentation

Employees who are absent for 10 or more consecutive days will be required to provide a physician’s statement which will be provided by the Benefits Administrator, Human Resources. Employees who have been absent due to illness for 10 or more consecutive days are also required to provide medical documentation supporting their ability to return to work along with appropriate necessary accommodations.

Reporting of Absence to Human Resources

Supervisors are required to notify Human Resources when an employee is absent due to illness for three or more days; when the absence is the result of an occupational injury; or where there is a pattern of absence that has a negative impact on the employment relationship.

NOTE: SUPERVISORS ARE TO REPORT OCCUPATIONAL INJURIES TO HUMAN RESOURCES IMMEDIATELY.

Occupational Injury

In the case of an occupational injury, the benefits administrator ensures the necessary paperwork is completed in compliance with WSIB reporting requirements.

Contact with Employee

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For absences longer than 10 days in duration, the benefits administrator will maintain regular contact with the employee to support a timely return to work and identify any support required in order to facilitate the return.

If the benefits administrator, in consultation with the employee, determines that a return to work is not imminent or that an accommodation would expedite the return to work the benefits administrator will advise the supervisor and the union representative accordingly.

Where an employee has been absent due to illness for a period of four months, and a return to work is not imminent, the benefits administrator will initiate the necessary paperwork for a long term disability claim.

It is the responsibility of the employee to ensure that appropriate medical documentation is submitted to support the LTD claim.

Notice of Return to Work

The employee is required to provide adequate notice of his/her ability to return to work. The length of notice will be dependent on the length of the absence. A minimum of 2 weeks notice and/or consultation with the benefits administrator and the supervisor is expected.

Standard Return to Work

In cases where the employee will return to his/her position without accommodation, the benefits administrator will maintain contact with the employee, the supervisor and the union representative until such time as the employee is back to work.

Accommodated Return to Work

In those cases where the employee requires accommodation, the employee will provide physician's documentation to support the accommodation and the benefits administrator will work with the employee and the supervisor in facilitating the accommodated return to work. In some cases the College may request an independent medical examination for verification and or assistance with respect to return to work accommodation.

Non-Standard Return to Work

In those cases where the employee is able to return to work but unable to return to his/her position, the benefits administrator will meet with the Director, Human Resources, the supervisor, and the union representative to identify potential job assignments that match the employee's abilities and limitations. The benefits

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administrator will then facilitate a meeting of the employee, the supervisor, the union representative and where appropriate the 3rd party representative to discuss the employee's new job assignment and to facilitate a return to work. It may be necessary for the employee to participate in training prior to assuming the new work assignment. This training will be factored into the return to work plan. The benefits administrator will also work with the supervisor to ensure that assistive devices required to support the return to work are in place.

Dispute Resolution

Disputes that may arise during the return to work process, including the individual's level of function and/or skills, the demands of the job, or the appropriateness of the accommodation will be addressed through a meeting of the benefits administrator, the employee, the supervisor, the union representative, and where appropriate, the 3rd party representative.

Any disputes that cannot be resolved through this mechanism will be referred to the Vice President, Human Resources or his/her designate.

Communications and Training

Distribution of practice to all employees.
Inclusion in new staff orientation.

Continuous Improvement

The benefits administrator will provide the Human Resources team with a quarterly report indicating the number of employees absent due to illness or injury, the duration of the absence, interventions in place to facilitate early return to work, and the success of those interventions. The Human Resources team will analyze the quarterly reports to identify trends or emerging issues that require action as well as recommend strategies for minimizing lost time due to illness and injury. The college agrees to confer with and receive any recommendations from the Local Union when reviewing the policy.