

RTW: RETURN-TO-WORK EMPLOYER-PHYSICIAN PARTNERSHIP

The WCB's goal is to help an injured worker recover so he/she can resume normal life activities as soon as it is medically safe to do so. This requires a working partnership between the worker, health care practitioner, employer and the WCB. The following information relates specifically to the employer-physician partnership.

Canadian Medical Association

The Canadian Medical Association recognizes the importance that RTW can play in the health, well being and recovery of injured workers. It states:

Prolonged absence from one's normal roles, including absence from the workplace, is detrimental to a person's mental, physical and social well-being. Physicians should therefore encourage a patient's return to function and work as soon as possible after an illness or injury, provided that return to work does not endanger the patient, his or her coworkers or society. A safe and timely return to work benefits the patient and his or her family by enhancing recovery and reducing disability. Through improvement of health outcomes, a safe and timely return to work also preserves a skilled and stable workforce for employers and society and reduces demands on health and social services as well as on disability plans.

CMA Policy document: PD01-09 Name of Policy: 2000-Dec-09 The Physicians role in helping patients return to work after an illness or injury (updated 2000)

As it relates to the employer-physician relationship, it states:

.... Ultimately, the employer determines the type of work available and whether a physician's recommendations concerning an employee's return to work can be accommodated. In recognition of the employee-employer relationship, physicians should encourage their patients to take an active role in and to take responsibility for the return to work and to communicate directly and regularly with their employers...."

...When requested by the employer, the physician, with the patient's consent should be as specific as possible in describing the patient's work capabilities and any work accommodation required. Whenever possible, the physician should state whether restrictions are permanent or temporary and give an estimate of recovery time. Also, the physician should give the date when the patient's progress and his or her work restrictions will be reassessed...

CMA Policy document: PD01-09 Name of Policy: 2000-Dec-09 The Physicians role in helping patients return to work after an illness or injury (updated 2000)

An electronic copy of the complete Canadian Medical Association's Return to Work Policy document is available on their website (CMA PolicyBase tab): www.cma.ca

College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Medical Association- Joint Position Paper

In the spring of 2006 the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan along with the Saskatchewan Medical Association developed a joint policy to provide guidance to physicians on their role of providing medical certification of illness or injury and/or assessing capacity for work.

This policy addresses the need of employers to receive medical restrictions from health care practitioners in order to design safe and suitable work for its injured workers.

This policy is reproduced In the College of Physician's and Surgeons of Saskatchewan, Spring 2007 newsletter, which also contains an article giving further explanation. In this article Dr. Shaw writes:

It may be of some assistance to share this policy with patients to assist them to understand that the physician's role in certifying illness or assessing capacity of work is to provide an objective evaluation and report the limitations that the patient/worker's injury/illness places on their ability to perform certain functions. It is the responsibility of the employer to manage the worker's return to modified or usual work duties with the benefit of the objective professional input from physicians and/or other health professionals.

College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan, Spring 2007 newsletter, "Role of Physicians in Certifying Illness and/or Assessing Capacity for Work", K. Shaw, MD, Deputy Registrar

For a full copy of this joint policy, as well as the accompanying article see the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan website, (enter in search box CPSS "Spring 2007 newsletter"): www.quadrant.net/cpss/index.html

Support Package for Physicians Treating Injured Workers

In December 2006 the Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board developed a publication to assist physicians in managing injured workers' recovery and return to work. It is a resource designed to provide guidance for physicians and helps define the roles and responsibilities physicians have in recovery and return to work processes.

The physician has a responsibility to maintain communication with the worker and the WCB about the extent of the worker's injury and the expected recovery timeline. The physician also has a responsibility to provide to the WCB and to the employer (via the worker) information about any restrictions the worker may have because of the injury, and to update any restrictions as the worker's condition progresses.

In almost all circumstances, restrictions should be provided unless the worker is hospitalized or house bound. The list of restrictions allows the employer to identify if appropriate work is available for the worker while they are recovering. The onus is on the employer to match work to the restrictions the physician has outlined.

A Support Package for Physicians Treating Injured Workers, Section 5, page 6, Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board, December 2006

For a copy of the complete physician's support package go to www.wcbsask.com/

- Go to the "Care Provider Services" tab
- On the right hand side of the page there is a banner named "Related Information"
- Underneath the banner is the link "Support Package for Physicians"