

# Returning to Work



*Supporting an injured employee's return to work is not always easy, but it's good for the employee and the school.*

This guide aims to help you understand why the return-to-work process is so important, what you can do to help and where you can get more information.

## Things you should know about the process of returning to work

The school's return-to-work obligations start even before an injured employee's claim has been accepted by the school's WorkCover Agent.

The relationship between the school leader and an injured employee can have a significant impact on the speed and long-term sustainability of the employee's return to work. An injured employee's return to work is a team effort. It involves the school leader, the Return to Work Coordinator and the WorkCover Agent, the injured employee, the employee's doctor and an occupational rehabilitation provider (if one is involved). Without the support of the school, it is harder for all those involved to do their part.

The school has legal return to work obligations under legislation. It is the role of the Return to Work Coordinator to assist the school to meet these obligations.

The employee does not need to be 100% recovered to return to work. Whether on reduced hours in their regular job or on modified or alternative duties, getting your employee back to work is an important part of the employee's rehabilitation while they are recovering.

By playing an active role in the return-to-work process you can retain the skills and knowledge of injured staff members and help build morale in the school by showing all employees that the injured staff member is valued.

A work-related injury or illness, whether it is physical or psychological, can have a big impact on what your injured employee is able to do. They may not be able to their previous role, either at work or at home.

## What the school can do

There are five key steps for schools to undertake to help an injured employee return to work:

1. Obtain relevant information about your employee's pre-injury role, work restrictions and capacity for work to help you plan your employee's return to work.
2. Consider whether reasonable workplace supports, aids or modifications are necessary to assist in your employee's return to work.
3. Assess and propose options for suitable or pre-injury employment that is consistent with the employee's capacity.
4. Provide your employee with clear, accurate and current details about their return to work arrangements. Seek to reach agreement on the return to work arrangements wherever possible.

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5. Monitor your employee's progress and the return to work arrangements (revise planning as required, such as when an employee's capacity changes or new information is received).

## Supporting the employee

From the moment you become aware of the employee's injury or illness, support the employee. Be respectful and non-judgmental in conversations with the employee and to others involved in their return to work. The first conversations with the employee following an injury or illness often 'sets the scene' for how positive the employee will feel about their injury, you, their school and returning to work.

Based on advice from your Return to Work Coordinator, keep in regular contact with your injured employee and make sure they still feel part of the team. If appropriate, invite them to attend meetings, training, send them correspondence (e.g. newsletters or updates) to help them feel connected while they are recovering.

When talking with the employee discuss their recovery to see how they are going and offer assistance where possible. It is best to focus on what the employee can do, rather than what they can't.

## Resources

- Return to Work Coordinators (Attachment)
- Return to Work Information Template (Attachment)
- Return to Work Solutions (Attachment)
- What You Need to Know about Return to Work (Attachment)
- Why is Return To Work Important? (Attachment)
- Doctors Restrictions Letter (Attachment)
- Return to Work Arrangements Plan (Attachment)
- Supporting Ill and Injured Workers – Return to Work Part 1 & Part 2 (YouTube)

## Further information

### ***Catholic Education Melbourne***

03 9267 0431

### ***Catholic Education Office Ballarat***

03 5337 7135

### ***Catholic Education Office Sale***

03 5622 6600

### ***Catholic Education Office Sandhurst***

03 5443 2377