



Early Return to Work Programs

An early return to work (ERTW) program is an employer-led program designed to encourage and enable workers to come back to work after a workplace injury while accommodating any physical or mental restrictions established by the authorized medical provider.

Benefits of an ERTW Program:

- Reduces Cost
 - Fewer Medical Visits
 - Fewer Lost Wage Payments
 - Lowers Insurance Cost
- Increases Morale and Security
- Minimizes Litigation
- Reduces Fraudulent Claims



Implementing an ERTW Program:

- **Set the Groundwork**-Identify key participants-top management, supervisors, and employees.
- **Identify Alternate Duty Opportunities**-Identify injuries typical of a job and compare the job to existing positions that can be filled by an injured employee with gradual acclimation. Develop written descriptions for these duties.
- **Establish Communication Systems**-Identify and meet with medical providers, define communication procedures, and train supervisors that manage injured and alternate duty employees. Obtain an agreement from each group to support the program.

Types of Alternate Duty:

- **Modified Duty**-The temporary placement in an existing position that is not as physically demanding.
- **Restricted Duty**- The placement of the injured employee back to their normal position but with some elements of the job removed.
- **Gradual Acclimation**-The placement of the employee in their normal position on a time-limitation that gradually increases to a full day.
- **Total Accommodation**- The identification of special duties, consistent with physical restrictions, that are not done by the company on the typical workday.

Remember, all types of alternate duties should respect the dignity of the employee. Positions designed with punishment in mind are just as likely to increase claim management problems as they are to reduce costs.



For additional questions, contact our [Loss Control Department](#).

