

MODIFIED DUTY:

The Benefits For Injured Workers and Employers

AT A.I.M. Mutual Insurance Companies, we believe in having a Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work™ program, and we strive to be at-the-ready to assist policyholders in their efforts to create modified duty programs. We believe that the sooner an employee returns to work, the better the recovery outcome.

Preparedness is important when thinking about the implementation of a modified duty program. Knowing what the transitional duty jobs are going to be before an injury occurs and making sure your workers are aware of these jobs, allow for an easier move from regular duty to modified duty. Injured workers who aren't able to work often become bored, depressed, or anxious, which doesn't bode well for a positive outcome.

Several factors need to be considered when thinking about bringing someone back on modified duty. The most important is that if employees continue to come to work everyday, the likelihood that they will become malingerers is greatly reduced. They will continue to feel a part of the organization, be less apt to hire an attorney, and may even recover into their regular job more quickly. The longer injured workers are out of work, the harder it is to bring them back.

Finding work for an injured employee is not an easy task. Doctor-imposed restrictions that state "one-handed work, only" seem impossible to meet. What if a worker is the only person in the facility that knows how to do a particular job? Sometimes it seems easier to just say, "Come back when you can do full duty." Easier, maybe; wiser, maybe not.

How does a company prepare for a potential modified duty situation? The shortest route to a modified duty program is determining how to modify individual jobs. Can some functions be farmed out to other departments or temporarily eliminated for the short-term? Are there other positions within the company that could take on additional job duties while a worker is on restricted duty? For some workers, modified duty is more desirable than their regular job, so it is also important to set a limit on how long modified duty will last.

The benefit to planning a true job modification is that it keeps injured workers in their own jobs during the recovery period. Setting out to create these modifications can at first appear daunting, but with some brainstorming and creativity, modified duty jobs can be constructed. Ideally, these jobs would alleviate some pressure in other areas of your facility, free up some time for other tasks within the department, and set up slots for injured workers to fill should the need arise.



Lisa Grilo

Lisa Grilo has been with A.I.M. Mutual for more than 22 years and holds the position of Regional Claim Specialist Supervisor. She heads a team of Regional Claim Specialists who work in the field investigating workers' comp claims and defending cases at the conciliation level of the litigation process.

Workers who are treated at an occupational health facility often come back to work with "capability" notes rather than "disability" notes. Having an occupational health facility adds trained professionals to your Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work™ program.

Keeping injured employees at work greatly reduces the cost of claims. It also avoids long-term disability for workers who might prefer to be at work rather than at home. And it is a deterrent to those workers who might be looking for an opportunity to take a few days off. Maintaining employees' sense of worth and allowing employees to feel productive will not only benefit them, but it will create an opportunity for the employer to get a return on its investment: a salary for getting a job done rather than disability benefits for a worker who is sitting at home collecting a paycheck.

For more information on modified duty, visit our forms library at www.aimmutual.com to download our Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work™ booklet. ■

WORK INJURY CLAIMS

1 WORKER'S DETAILS

Title	Family name
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Given names	
<input type="text"/>	
Other known or previous legal names eg. <input type="text"/>	
<input type="text"/>	

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