

# UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-STEVENS POINT 2019 UPDATE

## EARLY RETURN TO WORK POLICY AND PROCEDURES

### Policy and Procedures regarding the Early Return to Work of UW-Stevens Point employees who have sustained work-related injuries/illnesses

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#### **I. POLICY:**

The health and well being of all employees is of great importance to UW-Stevens Point. It is well documented that injuries affect the whole person and that effective rehabilitation and treatment must also address the whole person. Part of that treatment includes keeping physically and mentally active within the restrictions of the particular injury. UW-Stevens Point will make every effort to help employees to maximize their healing and facilitate their early return to work.

Consistent with the general intent of Wisconsin Statutes Chapter 102 (Worker's Compensation), the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (UWSP) will make every reasonable effort to return to the workplace UWSP employees who have sustained job-related injuries or illnesses, and as a result are temporarily prevented from returning to their full former employment.

For injuries or illnesses that occur off the job, UWSP's medical leave and leave of absence policies apply. If the injury or illness constitutes a disability, campus policies regarding reasonable accommodations may apply. Employees must contact their supervisors regarding the need for such an accommodation. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator is available for general information and assistance to the colleges/divisions/departments in making a determination on accommodations.

**II. PRACTICE:** The Human Resources Office has the responsibility for the administration of claims for medical and disability benefits to employees who are injured on the job and the coordination of the early return-to-work program. Human Resources will work in close cooperation with the dean/division head/supervisor (or designee) to coordinate light or alternate duty assignments.

UWSP will make every reasonable effort to place returning employees in temporary modified positions within the limits of their restrictions. First priority for placement will be within the employee's department. Second priority will be for placement within the employing college/division. Third priority will be for placement in another employing unit within UWSP or an external State agency. (NOTE: The employer is under no obligation to create a position solely for this purpose). Light duty placement in one or more of the above is mandatory when restrictions allow.

The employee will be advised by the supervisor of the alternate duty chosen and will be assigned such duty for a period normally not to exceed 90 days per injury. The temporary duty should be reassessed after 90 days. The employee will be informed of her/his continued responsibility to follow the policies and procedures of the faculty, academic staff, or classified service, as appropriate.

**III. PROCEDURE:** The initial consideration for returning an employee to work will be made by the original department. In most cases, the employee's own department should be able to find a suitable fit. However, where the original employing department cannot make a suitable fit or cannot return the employee to work the Human Resources will work with the deans/division head to determine if temporary alternate duty is available.

All restrictions for work related injuries must be in writing from the treating medical provider. When given a work restriction from a medical provider all employees are to still report to work at their regular scheduled time to have the restrictions reviewed. Supervisors are not to release or send employees home until all review and assessment is completed by the department and approved by Human Resources.

Upon receipt of these restrictions, the employee's supervisor or the employee's department chair / director will assess how such restrictions will impact the employee's ability to perform his or her job duties. If a question exists as to such ability, Human Resources will communicate with the employee's physician. This communication will include:

1. a letter requesting the medical facts to support the doctor's certification of the employee's restrictions and a medical prognosis as to the duration such restrictions will apply;
2. a copy of the employee's Position Description;
3. a statement indicating the extent of physical demands normally encountered in the performance of the position, such as bending, lifting, climbing stairs, pushing, pulling, walking, handling of heavy items, deadline demands, high-volume public contact, etc., if available.

The employer reserves the right to obtain a second medical opinion on the employee's condition at the employer's expense.

The physician's certification and any additional information regarding the restrictions are reviewed. Determination will be made whether the employee can:

1. return to a full workload and schedule without modification of duties;
2. return to a full work load and schedule with temporary (90 days or less) modification of duties;
3. return to work at a less-than-full schedule temporarily, but without modification of duties;
4. return to work at a less-than-full schedule temporarily, with temporary (90 days or less) modification of duties; or
5. return to work in a different position for a limited period of time, not to exceed 90 days.

This analysis will be done with the assistance of the worker's compensation coordinator and is necessary to determine whether an appropriate position is available. Any temporary change in schedule or duties is to last for a period not to exceed 90 days. At the 90-day limit, a reassessment is required.

If it is determined that modifications in hours or duties are necessary, consideration will be given to:

1. the severity of the employee's condition and the extent to which his or her ability to work is impaired;
2. whether the employee's condition is temporary or permanent, and if temporary, for what duration it is expected to continue;
3. the extent to which regular job duties or hours may be temporarily altered;
4. the impact of any alteration in hours or duties on the productivity, workload, or work environment of other employees;
5. the availability of alternative work assignments.

Human Resources will review any classification or contract concerns in finding or developing a modified duty position. If accommodation cannot be made within the employee's department, the dean/division head/supervisor (or designee) or Human Resources will check with other areas within the college/division for temporary placement of the employee.

In the event an employee refuses an accommodation or reassignment to duties which are within the employee's restrictions and ability to perform, the employer is not obligated to provide alternatives. The employee may also be subject to a limitation or termination of any benefits for lost time being received under the Worker's Compensation program.

#### **IV. FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY:**

The employee's department will be responsible for the wage and benefit costs during the period of a temporary placement external to the department. UWSP receives an annual premium assessment for Worker's Compensation costs. This premium is based on both employee exposure and claims experience and is allocated to major divisions and auxiliary units. Thus, there is an incentive for departments to reduce Worker's Compensation lost time payment costs.

## **V. END OF HEALING:**

If, at the end of the healing period, permanent employees' restrictions prevent them from returning to the occupational area of their former employment, they will be assisted in finding other employment on campus, within their restrictions and classification. Reasonable accommodations consistent with ADA guidelines may be applicable. The dean/division head/supervisor (or designee) will work with the Human Resources for possible placement elsewhere within UWSP. Failing that, employment elsewhere within the UW-System will be sought. If no other suitable employment can be found, the employee will be assisted in obtaining retraining through the state Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). Upon request, employees will be assisted in applying for disability retirement under the applicable provisions of the regulations of the Department of Employee Trust Funds (ETF). The UWSP Human Resources Office will provide coordination with these two agencies as necessary.

## **VI. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:**

### Injured Employee

- Follows campus rules and practices;
- Reports injury immediately to supervisor;
- Completes all needed paperwork as soon as possible;
- Maintains contact with supervisor;
- Provides regular updates, at least weekly, with medical reports on health condition and treatment to worker's compensation coordinator;
- Returns to offered modified duty (if any) which is within medical restrictions (if any) as set by the treating physician.

### Supervisor/Department Designee

- Informs employees of campus work rules and practices;
- Initiates immediate medical treatment for injured employee when necessary;
- Reports the injury and completes all needed paperwork as soon as possible;
- Conducts investigation and corrects hazard;
- Maintains contact with the injured worker and the worker's compensation coordinator;
- When appropriate, finds or develops modified work for employee, within medical restrictions;
- Identifies and offers modified duty assignment to the injured employee.

### Human Resources Office

- Reviews all forms for full completion by correct persons;
- Informs the injured worker of rights and responsibilities;
- Works with medical personnel to obtain information regarding the injury;
- Investigates the scene of accidents and reviews accident with injured employee and supervisor when appropriate;
- Maintains contact with the injured employee;
- Maintains contact with the UW System Office of Risk Management;
- Makes safety recommendations when necessary;
- Meets with the supervisor to determine specific job tasks and suggest appropriate job modifications;
- Coordinates activities on campus with outside investigation and rehabilitation professionals and assists in any additional investigation of claims;
- Concentrates on returning the employee to work activities that are based on physical limitations and transferable skills;
- Assists with the development of modified duty assignments;
- Acts as liaison for all interested parties;
- Maintains injury records and history;
- Reviews injury data to spot trends of injuries and accidents;
- Develops and implements employee safety training programs.

UW-System Office of Risk Management Claims Examiner

- Holds responsibility for administering the claim, including all approvals and denials for payment;
- Assists in strategies for handling claims;
- Provides the campus with monthly, quarterly, and annual claims data;
- Recommends and assigns rehabilitation nurses, consultants, and other outside support as needed;
- Provides cost containment services including medical treatment utilization reviews, medical bill audits, and investigation services.