



return-to-work services



sedgwick®

Sedgwick's experienced team drives job accommodations for our customers' employees immediately for every injury. Our expert claims and managed care colleagues help injured employees return to work as quickly and safely as possible.

Rapid and efficient return-to-work coordination is a critical component of any risk management program. Returning to work after an injury or illness can be difficult depending on the circumstances involved. Return-to-work management requires skillful coordination and persistent intervention.

The keys to ensuring success include having a return-to-work program focused on teamwork and consistent communication among all parties – the employer, claims examiner, nurse, return-to-work and behavioral health specialists – and most importantly, the injured employee. This ensures that everyone is on the same page when the return-to-work goals and plans are being developed. The involvement of individuals such as a nurse and return-to-work or behavioral health specialist should be determined by systematic triggers and human expertise. Frequent communication keeps the employer informed of what's going on and ensures the employee remains connected to their workplace – a vital part of the process.

In addition, communicating with everyone prevents duplication of effort and reduces the chances for confusion for the employer and injured employee. There really has to be collaboration among all parties to set expectations and to ensure everyone understands the return-to-work goals. If the nurse, examiner, and return-to-work and behavioral health specialists are all working for the same company, the team can coordinate with one another to ensure the right person with the right expertise is on the file at any given time – providing increased flexibility and shared accountability.

Studies show that the longer an injured employee is off work, the greater the likelihood that they will become permanently disabled. Consider the statistics below:

- 10% of people who are off work at 4 weeks after their first date of absence will never return to work
- 50% of people who are off work at 12 weeks after their first date of absence will never return to work
- 98% of people who are off work at 52 weeks after their first date of absence will never return to work¹

Early involvement is required

Sedgwick engages the injured employee by beginning the conversations immediately after the injury, so the employee understands the company's return-to-work policy and each person's role in the process – including their own. This lets the employee know what will be expected and can reassure the employee that their employer is committed to helping facilitate a safe return to work. Also, as the statistics show, the less time injured employees are off work, the higher the chances they will go back.

It is very important to get all of the resources needed involved early in the claim so that a plan can be formulated. The overall process can be driven by a return-to-work specialist, a nurse or a behavioral health specialist, depending on the complexity of the situation. Early and frequent communication sets the tone for cooperation among all parties.



Driving positive outcomes

Successful stay-at-work and return-to-work programs are designed to create ways for employees to perform meaningful and productive work as soon as possible following an injury. This offers many benefits to you and your employees including:

- Reduces overall claim costs
- Allows the injured employee to continue to be productive and contribute to the company
- Improves and maintains communications between the employer, the injured employee and the treating physician, which can lead to a more positive outcome
- Allows the employer to monitor the employee's progress, thereby reducing the likelihood of malingering
- Promotes better morale and retention of valuable employees by reinforcing the employer's commitment and concern for the injured employee

Another benefit of developing a stay-at-work or return-to-work program is that they can help employers comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Under the ADA, employers are required to make reasonable accommodations for employees who may otherwise be barred from productive employment as long as the accommodation is not placing an undue hardship on the employer. The ADA encourages employers to provide temporary or permanent accommodations for work-related injuries the same as it does for return-to-work scenarios that are not work-related.

Attempting to put silos around how the ADA and its amendments pertain to return to work and disabilities can be detrimental not only for the employee's return-to-work success, but also for the employer from a legal perspective.

Engaging the injured employee

For employers, having a multi-disciplinary team involved in the return-to-work process is part of a focus on advocacy for the people who make them successful. The primary objective is not just driving return-to-work or medical cost containment. It is also about connecting with the injured employee and making sure the employee, and their family members and manager understand what to expect. Efficient communication across the injury management team delivers trust for the employee, as well as a sense of accountability for their own recovery.

Contact Sedgwick today to learn more about our return-to-work services and other managed care solutions.

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¹Based on a study from 60 Summits Project, Inc.