

Transitional Return to Work Policy

Effective Date: July 1, 2018 with *revisions on February 26, 2020*

Responsible Office: Human Resources

Program Purpose: As the health, well-being, and safety of all employees at Northwestern State University (from this point forward referred to as the *University*) are primary goals, the *University* has developed, in compliance with R.S. 39:1547, a *Transitional Return to Work (TRW) Policy*. This plan has been designed with the following objectives in mind:

- To provide the earliest possible safe return to work after an occupational injury or illness;
- To provide employees more options in returning to work, as opposed to waiting for a full duty release;
- To retain qualified, tenured employees; thereby using their expertise and training;
- To facilitate a safer work environment by assuming more responsibility for injured workers; and
- To reduce medical costs of worker's compensation claims due to extended work absences.

Program Framework: To qualify for the program, in addition to being off work due to a work-related injury or illness, the employee must be receiving worker's compensation and have their attending physician's approval to return to transitional duties/work. If the employee meets these criteria, the University will make reasonable efforts to place the returning employee in a meaningful assignment while on temporary limited/light duty. Placement is NOT guaranteed, as the University is not obligated to offer, create, or encumber a position for the sole purpose of placement. Final placement decisions are made by the University's appointing authorities.

If a transitional duty is offered until the employee can return to full duty, it must be offered for the length certified by the attending physician/other provider but for no longer than one (1) year. Also, the physician/provider must delineate the physical restrictions and job duty constraints. Once this information has been obtained, the first priority for placement is within the employee's unit. The second priority, obviously, is in another unit of the University.

Should a program-eligible employee refuse an accommodation or reassignment, the University is not obligated to provide another alternative. This refusal must be made in writing by the employee and submitted to the Environmental Health & Safety Officer, who will communicate with the Office of Risk Management (ORM) for appropriate action. This action may include termination.

Additionally, the *TRW Policy* is not meant to interfere with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Supervisors of those employees requesting a reasonable accommodation should contact:

Veronica M. Biscoe
Executive Director, Institutional Effectiveness & Human Resources
Northwestern State University
Natchitoches, LA 71497
318-357-6359
ramirezv@nsula.edu

Program Responsibilities: A team approach for the *TRW Policy* is expected for both the employee and the University to benefit and be successful. The Transitional Return to Work Team (Team) consists of representatives from Human Resources, Environmental Health & Safety, and the affected departmental supervisor. This group also will work with the Office of Risk Management-Workers' Compensation Division to determine which employees on worker's compensation might be eligible for the program. The intent of the Team is to review all cases of employees who are off duty as a result of a work-related injury or illness with the goal of returning said employee to productive work as soon as possible.

The Team will be responsible for developing a tracking system in order to determine the effectiveness of the program. A report including number of work-related injured/ill employees, along with the number of associated lost time (days) will be reported monthly to the Office of Risk Management.

Below are the responsibilities of those involved in this process.

Employee

- Immediately report job-related injury or illness to supervisor
- Complete the *State Employee Incident/Accident Investigation Form* found at: <http://ehs.nsula.edu/assets/2016/PDF-Files/Employee-Accident-Incident-Report-2016.pdf>
- Additional information regarding accidents can be found on the Environmental Health & Safety Office web page: <http://ehs.nsula.edu/accidents-and-incidents/>
- Comply with University attendance/leave procedures
- Maintain biweekly communication with supervisor and Human Resources
- Provide physician with job description and Physician's Certification
- Comply with medical treatment and all appointments
- Return to duty (transitional or full) when requested
- Collaborate with the Team in the development of the transitional duties

Employee's Supervisor

- Share any employee updates received with Human Resources
- If necessary, work with Team to develop a TRW plan
- Monitor employee progress during transitional duties
- Maintain confidentiality

Human Resources (HR) (HR Director)

- Process personnel actions related to transitional duty
- Maintain confidentiality

Environmental Health & Safety (EHS) Officer

- Investigate the accident
- Provide assistance in completion of the *State Employee Incident/Accident Investigation Form*
- Report the accident to the Office of Risk Management via the online claims system
- Point of contact with ORM Workers' Compensation representative
- Process claim information.
- Receive from HR Analyst C Workers Compensation all information requested by ORM Workers Compensation; Employee job description, E-2: Prior Injury Form, Leave slips and Time sheets, Questionnaire's from Workers' Compensation representative

Transitional Return to Work Coordinator (HR Director)

- Coordinate Team and meetings
- Facilitate and monitor TRW Program
- As needed, collaborate with ADA Coordinator to develop and facilitate accommodations
- Monitor employee progress
- Maintain confidentiality
- Responsible for reports related to TRW Program

Transitional Return to Work Team (includes all the above individuals)

- Review employee job duties
- Review Physical Capabilities Worksheet
- Assist with defining transitional work duties and plan
- Reevaluate plan every 30 days
- If necessary, work with ORM and Workers' Compensation
- Participate in all TRW-related meetings
- Maintain confidentiality

Forms Used in this Policy

- DA WC4000: Transitional Return To Work Audit Form
- Physicians Modified Work Information Sheet*

*A review of worker's compensation cases made evident the difficulty associated with the employee trying to get their physician to complete this form. In lieu of this form, the University will accept information regarding employee restrictions and how long they should last, if that document provides the physician's signature.

Appointing Authority Signature:

Signed copy on file

Dr. Chris Maggio, President

February 27, 2020

Date