

# RETURN TO WORK INFORMATION SESSIONS

## ON-BOARDING TRAINING PARTICIPANT GUIDE



## Course Introduction

Welcome to this course! This course will answer the following questions:

- What is the mandate of the Workers' Compensation Board?
- What is a return-to-work program?
- What are the benefits of a return-to-work program?

The course will also provide an overview of the return-to-work process.

It concludes with a case study (or case studies, depending on time) that will encourage you to reflect on what you know about the return-to-work process, and the roles and responsibilities of the different parties that are involved in the process.

## Introduction

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Understand WCB Nova Scotia's role and strategic priorities.
- Understand the purpose and benefits of a return-to-work program.
- Understand the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in the return-to-work process.

### Message from Government

In 2022-23, the Government of Nova Scotia committed \$3 million dollars to continue efforts to support safe workplaces for Continuing Care (Long-Term Care and Home Care) and Disability Support Program sectors.

The implementation of a return-to-work program was a key initiative approved by Government as part of this commitment to support employees who experience workplace injuries.

The goals of the program are to:

- Support injured and ill employees in a healthy and earlier return-to-work process focused on “ability” in the Long-Term Care, Home Care, and Disability Support Programs sectors.
- Keep trained and experienced employees on the job and promote a healthy workplace for the recruitment and retention of employees.

## Targeted Return-to-Work Outcomes

These outcomes are targets for all employers in the Long-Term Care, Home Care and Disability Support Programs sectors to strive for in reducing injuries. They were decided on by the Department of Community Services, and the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care approved them as goals for the program through WSI.



**Targeted Outcome 1** Achieve at least a 2-5% reduction annually in all claims and time loss claims.

**Targeted Outcome 2** Achieve at least a 5-10% reduction annually in the average number of weeks paid

**Targeted Outcome 3** Achieve at least a 5-10% reduction annually in temporary benefits paid

## About WCB Nova Scotia

WCB Nova Scotia is the province's provider of workplace injury insurance.

They provide workplace injury insurance to more than 20,000 employers and approximately 335,000 employees across the province.



Every day, WCB Nova Scotia:

- Works to reduce the human and financial impact of workplace injury.
- Works to prevent workplace injury and provide security from its impact to employees and their families.
- Supports families in the wake of workplace tragedy.

WCB Nova Scotia is a leader in Nova Scotia's growing workplace safety culture.



## Workplace Injury



- The number of workplace injuries that occur in Nova Scotia has gone down significantly over the past 10 years.
- The LTC, HC, and DSP sectors are amongst the highest in injury frequency, injury duration, and time loss against provincial averages.
- When Nova Scotians are injured on the job, it's taking longer for them to return to work.

## WCB NS Strategic Priorities

WCB Nova Scotia has 5 strategic priorities, which are:

- Injury Prevention
- Return to Work
- Our People and Their Service
- Supporting System Reform
- Funding Our Future

This course is focused on **Return to Work**, but **Injury Prevention** is the goal first and foremost.

### Injury Prevention Mandate

"We will continue to reduce the provincial workplace injury rate and work toward the elimination of workplace fatalities"

### Return to Work Mandate

"We will support people injured on the job and their employers by working to improve our support for timely and safe return to work".

To accomplish their **Injury Prevention Mandate**, WCB Nova Scotia will:

- Strive for a Nova Scotia where no one dies on the job.
- Continue to support a safety culture and tangible safety leadership in health care, particularly long-term care, and home care.

- Continue to support workers and employers in preventing and managing the long-term impact of work-related psychological injury.
- Expand and improve upon senior relationships with WCB executive leaders and major employers to inform and inspire them in injury prevention and return to work.

To accomplish their **Return-to-Work Mandate**, WCB Nova Scotia will:

- Improve their service, overall, toward supporting and partnering with workers, employers, and health care providers in better return to work outcomes.
- Ensure more workplaces have a strong, active return-to-work program, and increase awareness among those we serve about the importance of return to work.
- Add new services with a distinct focus on supporting workers with psychological injuries, and those for whom psychological factors come to influence their physical recovery.
- Leverage the potential in virtual medicine and therapy to remove geographical barriers to treatment.

## What is Return to Work?

### What it is:

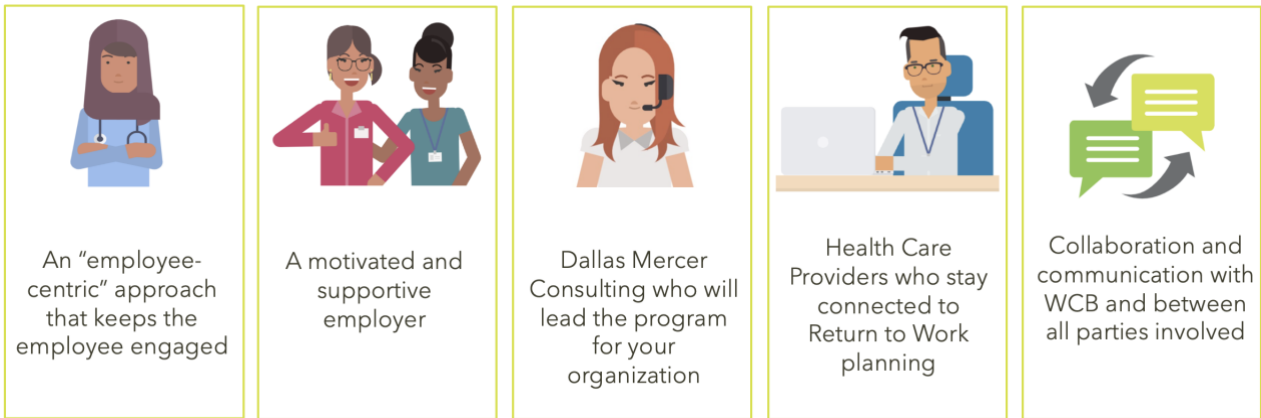
- Focuses on what a person **can** do safely at work.
- Timely and Safe Return to Work (TSRTW) is the collaborative process that considers an employee's restrictions and limitations immediately following an injury that will enable safe recovery at work.
- Looks at the functional abilities of the employee and considers applicable legislation, health, and safety requirements.

### What it isn't:

- It is not the program to implement following a catastrophic injury or when restrictions and limitations permanently prevent an employee from doing their pre-injury work.

## Return to Work

A Return-to-Work program includes:



An employee-centric approach is an approach that places the worker as a **central key decision maker** regarding their vocational recovery and return to work. It focuses on building employee autonomy through leading with the employees' voice regarding their situational and contextual motivation, expectations, and concerns; and actively engaging them in action planning.

### Why is Return to Work Important?

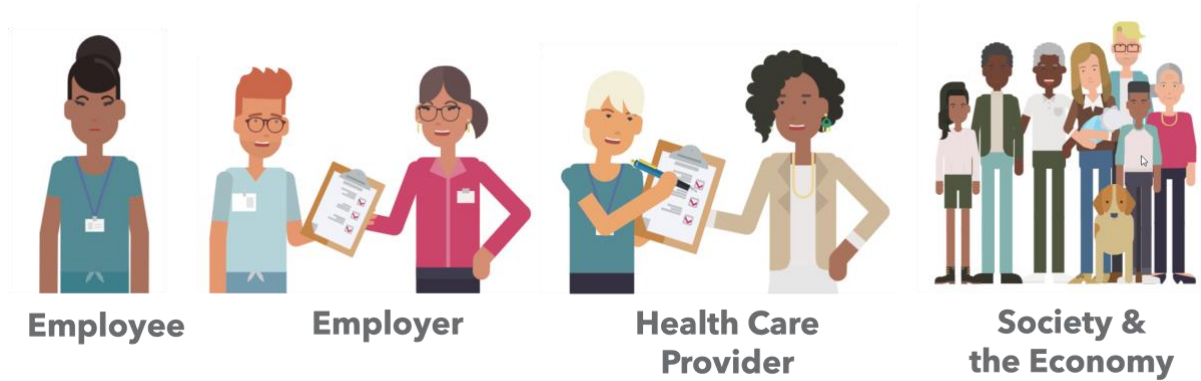
Work plays a large role in our lives. Not being able to work, for any reason, can result in financial and/or psychological hardship. There are several factors that motivate someone's return to work.

Some may include:

- Personal identity
- Staying connected to colleagues and routine.
- Avoiding financial hardship
- Being seen as a valued employee
- A 'work is healthy' mindset.
- Understanding the rehabilitative value of work

## Benefits of Return to Work

Implementing a return-to-work program benefits everyone!



Behind every person hurt on the job, there's a team of people making their road to return and return to work as timely and safe as possible.

Just as a workplace injury has wide-spread impacts on the workforce, implementing a return-to-work program has wide-spread benefits. These include benefits for:

- The employee and their household
- The employer
- Co-workers and supervisors
- Health care providers
- WCB Nova Scotia
- Society and the economy as a whole



## Benefits for Employees



- Values the contributions of individuals to their workplaces by keeping them connected to their workplaces.
- Maintains a sense of confidence and value while having clear direction and goals.
- Eases the psychological impacts of being injured (i.e., reduces anxiety which can impact recovery).
- Promotes overall healthier and safer workplaces that minimize the impact of time-loss through collaboration with all parties involved.

## Benefits for Employers



- Promotes workplace morale and employee retention while supporting recovery at work.
- Keeps employers connected to employees who are valuable resources to their workplace.
- Demonstrates value of employees and that employers care about their people.
- Keeps employers connected to employees who are valuable resources to their workplace.
- Maintains services and reduces loss of productivity and claim costs.

## Benefits for Health Care Providers



- Uses expertise to provide a proper assessment of functional abilities which will help to determine an employee's RTW goals.
- Remains connected to RTW planning including the expectations established by the employee, employer, and case worker.
- Becomes an integral member of the 'Return to Work' team which places the employees recovery and overall wellbeing at the centre.

## Benefits of Return to Work | Society & the Economy



- Contributes to an overall better quality of life for individuals, their families, and communities because safer workplaces are an essential component to a healthy, vibrant society and economy.
- Avoids transferring the burden to other systems that are under constraints.

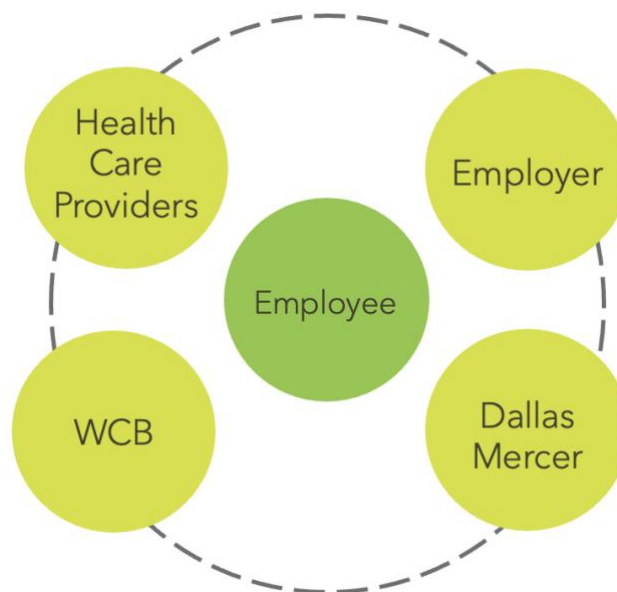
## Roles & Responsibilities

The next part of this course is focused on roles and responsibilities. It starts with an overview, before examining the roles of the:

- Employee
- Employer
- Dallas Mercer Consulting
- WCB
- Health Care Provider

## Roles & Responsibilities

Ensuring a timely and safe return to work requires all parties to effectively work together to support the employee. In addition, a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities for all parties involved enables better communication and decision-making.



## The Return-to-Work Journey

### Initiation of Process

Injury occurs; direct access to Health Care Provider is initiated; injury report is filed; parties are notified; WCB claim is registered



### Treatment / Monitoring/ RTW Plan

Ongoing treatment occurs; RTW Plan progresses (or initiated); ongoing monitoring, reporting and reassessment and reducing of barriers if required



### Assessment

Health Care Provider assessment conducted; treatment recommendations provided to all parties (including restrictions and limitations); RTW Plan initiated



### Long-Term Accommodations

Employee at Maximum Medical Recovery/ Permanent Impairment likely & pre-injury job is ruled out; long-term accommodation is requested and initiated

The entire return-to-work journey is not a linear process. Long-term accommodations are not the end point and are rare. The return-to-work journey requires consistent communication and collaboration with all parties.

**Important Note:** If an employee's psychological injury is the result of a workplace event or series of events, employers should use the standard claims process to report the injury. WCB will then recommend an appropriate course of action according to the Traumatic Psychological Injury Program process.

## Employee Roles & Responsibilities

Employees who have been injured must understand their roles and responsibilities in the return-to-work process, including:

- Immediately notifying the supervisor of any work-related injury or illness, with full, accurate & timely information about the incident(s) or event
- Actively participating in the RTW program and treatment plans, and having frequent contact with the treatment team – including DMC
- Immediately notifying DMC of changes that may affect a claim or RTW plan

## Employer Roles & Responsibilities

- Create a safe work environment.
- Promote accommodation opportunities through a safety culture focused on Return to Work
- Support training and communication to ensure employees are aware of their roles and responsibilities.
- Immediately offer employees who report an injury modified/transitional duties while notifying DMC of the injury
- Provide care for employees when injured.
- Support employees throughout the Return to Work process.
- Stay informed on the status of a workers' claim.
- Welcome the employee back through supportive leadership.

## WCB Roles & Responsibilities

WCB works with workplaces across Nova Scotia to help prevent workplace injuries, establish strong return-to-work programs, and inform and inspire Nova Scotians to promote healthy and safe workplaces. This includes:

- Providing workplace injury insurance to employers, which in turn offers financial and medical benefits to employees in Nova Scotia
- Working to reduce the human and financial impact of workplace injury
- Providing security to injured employee and their families by supporting their timely and safe return to work.
- Claims administration, support, and return-to-work.
- Field services and employer account support
- Classifications, assessment, rate setting
- Injury prevention coaching, outreach, education
- Prevention campaigns, social marketing, and communications
- Partnership and awareness initiatives

## WCB Case Worker Roles & Responsibilities

Case workers are WCB employees who collaborate with employees, Dallas Mercer Consulting, employers, and health care providers. They help keep the employee engaged in the return-to-work process by:

- Facilitating and implementing return to work planning, working with all involved parties
- Working with employees and employers to support transitional or modified work and workplace modification options.
- Coordinating and ensuring any required health care and rehabilitation services are working towards the employee's successful return to work.
- Making timely and informed entitlement and service decisions on claims
- Keeping employee recovery top of mind and helps navigate the recovery and claims process.
- Ensuring eligibility and access to benefit payments for earnings lost, along with costs for medical services, are provided.

## Health Care Provider Roles & Responsibilities

Health Care Providers (HCPs) have a unique line of sight when it comes to an employee's injuries, illnesses or struggles. HCPs can support return to work by:

- Being an advocate of "work is healthy" philosophy, communicating the health benefits of timely and safe return to work.
- Conducting functional abilities assessment and other services, assisting with recovery and safe return to work
- Providing clinical care and treatment to employees
- Understanding work environment and job demands, comparing functional abilities assessment with critical demands of employee's pre-injury job requirements and available transitional work.
- Helping to identify & remove barriers to determine transitional work; with the employee, Dallas Mercer Consulting, employers and WCB.
- Creating a treatment plan with the employee
- Providing regular updates to all parties involved



## Dallas Mercer Consulting Roles and Responsibilities

Dallas Mercer Consulting acts as the employer's representative and has responsibilities along the RTW continuum, including:

### Claim Managements

- Handle day-to-day claim management tasks keeping employers informed as to status.
- Review and revise the injury form and forward to WCB within the required time frame.
- Discuss any concerns regarding the claim with the employer along with accommodation requests and support as appropriate.
- Discuss the need for additional relevant information to aid in the recovery and RTW planning with the WCB Case Worker.
- DMC may, when appropriate and on behalf of employers, initiate appeals.

### Return-to-Work Planning

- Provide training for managers and supervisors as required as to their role in the RTW process.
- Ensure employees understand the process and their roles in RTW including when and how to contact DMC.
- DMC will work with the employer and employees to ensure smooth transition to RTW.
- Collaborate with the employer to identify meaningful and productive modified or transitional work options.
- Collaborate with all stakeholders to develop progress RTW programs, keeping the employer representatives aware of progression.
- Create a personalized RTW plan with the employee, in accordance with their functional/cognitive abilities and in accordance with WCB legislation & policies.
  - DMC, with the employer, will initiate RTW immediately and will coach employers how to offer work immediately, if not already doing so
- If not already participating, DMC will set up and utilize a direct access program.

### Communication

- Document & communicate the RTW program, including policies, expectations of all stakeholders including DMC's role.

- Communicate with employer representatives, employees, healthcare providers, WCB and union representatives.
- Ensure employees questions and concerns are addressed.
- Foster relationship with employers to increase their knowledge of the WCB process, the value of RTW and improve outcomes.
- Develop and forward reports as outlined.
- Create templates for facilitating RTW plans.
- Foster relationships with injured employees answering questions, getting updates and ensuring they are compliant with the RTW program, their individualized plan and understand their obligations.
- DMC will have ongoing communication with WCB Case Manager to provide updates, seek clarification on functional information or seek assistance to mitigate RTW barriers.

## Return to Work Journey

### Process and Case Study

## Key Ingredients of Return-to-Work Programs



- Supports and ensures the employee has access to immediate healthcare treatment and timely and safe return to work.
- Establishes early communication to coordinate services and resources.
- Reduces the personal impact of a workplace injury.
- Decreases time away from work.
- Reduces the human and financial impact of a workplace injury to both the employer and employee.
- Supports recovery and return to health and work

## Employer Touch Points

Throughout the return-to-work process, employers will receive the following information:

### Information received by the employer throughout the RTW process:

- Claim entitlement information (e.g., acceptance, medical aid, earnings lost)
- Functional assessment report from the Health Care Provider
- When necessary, confirmation of RTW recommendations, including restrictions and limitations
- Updates on transitional work from DMC
- When necessary, long-term accommodation recommendation from DMC

### Points throughout the RTW process when participation/collaboration is required by the employer:

- Initiate direct health care service provider access
- Sign the 'Employer Representative Authorization Form' for DMC claim-related file access. Authorizations to be renewed annually
- Notify DMC of employee's injury/illness

- Support the identification of transitional work for the employee
- Collaborate with the employee on their RTW plan
- Collaborate with DMC and other relevant parties to facilitate and support services for RTW (including completion of injury report)
- Reviews the long-term accommodation request and determines the ability to provide the respective accommodation to the employee

## Transitional Work



- Transitional work is a **temporary** change to a job that aligns with what the employee can do.
- Changes need to take into consideration an employee's abilities, restrictions, and limitations to transition back to the pre-injury job during recovery. **This includes modified pre-injury work and alternate work.**
- **This work needs to be meaningful, productive and within the employee's skills and abilities** – transitional work helps both parties feel more productive and keeps the employee at the center of the return-to-work process.

## What Does Transitional Work Look Like?

### Modified pre-injury work.

Enabling safe work by taking the employee's **temporary** restrictions and limitations into consideration through changes to the non-essential duties of the pre-injury job, conditions of employment (e.g., work schedule) or addition of assistive devices to the pre-injury job.

### Alternate work

Enabling safe work by taking the employee's **temporary** restrictions and limitations into consideration through changing the essential duties of the pre-injury work with the goal of returning to the pre-injury work.

### Restrictions

Clear and specific things to avoid during recovery because there is a specific risk of harm or a safety concern, including but not limited to specific tasks, exposures, body motions, and/or positioned tolerances (e.g., “do not drive”)

### Limitation

A limitation defines *the extent* to which an employee may perform an activity but does not prevent an injured employee from performing that activity. (e.g., *lift up to 10 pounds*).

## Case Study



### Case Study

Jude is on the job when they hurt their ankle by slipping on something wet on the floor.



Jude tells their supervisor that they have been injured on the job. The supervisor informs DMC of Jude's injury.

DMC reaches out to Jude upon being informed of their injury.

**How should the employer and DMC support Jude during this initial interaction? What role will the employer and DMC and Jude play at this stage?**

*Use the space provided below each character to record your response.*

Jude



Employer



DMC





### Case Study 1 | Jude

How will Dallas Mercer Consulting support Jude during this initial interaction? What role will Dallas Mercer Consulting and Jude play at this stage?



When the Employer / DMC asked Jude what work they are capable of at present, Jude said they feel they could do sedentary work worker commenced sedentary work while DMC made a referral to physiotherapy for Jude to assess the ankle injury.

Jude went to physiotherapy for an assessment/treatment.

**How will the physiotherapist, WCB, and DMC work together to support Jude at this stage? What role will each of them play?**

*Use the space provided below each character to record your response.*

Physiotherapist



WCB Case Worker



DMC





Since it was determined that Jude was not capable of the physical demands of their pre-injury work, DMC communicated abilities, restrictions and limitations from the physiotherapist to Jude and their employer.

**How should DMC work together with Jude and their employer at this stage of the return-to-work process? What role do each of them play?**

*Use the space provided below each character to record your response.*

DMC



Employer



Jude



After 4 weeks of doing transitional work, the physiotherapist's assessment determined that Jude was now capable of the demands of their pre-injury work, and could return to their full pre-injury duties, successfully completing the RTW process!

## Continuous Improvement | Future Success



Keep an “employee-centric” approach in mind



Adapt & refine the RTW process  
Know who to reach out to for help



Collaboration and communication between all parties involved is a key success factor

It’s important to keep an “employee-centric” approach in mind when implementing return-to-work processes and policies.

Collaboration and communication between all parties involved is a key success factor!

## Program Support

If you have questions or concerns about how the new approach to RTW programming is rolling out at your workplace – you will receive contact information for a RTW Program Support phone line.

**902-491-8807**

You can call and leave a message with your name, question and your contact information and someone from our team will get back to you within 24-48 hours.

\*this number is only for questions related to the RTW program and not a process to support claims disputes.

## Appendix

### Introduction | Definitions

#### Determination of Employment

Did the employee experience a work-related injury or illness while working for an organization that carries WCB insurance?

#### Timely and Safe Return to Work (TSRTW)

A collaborative process that considers an employee's restrictions and limitations, at the earliest appropriate opportunity, immediately following an injury to enable safe recovery at work.

#### Suitable Employment

Work that is reasonably available in geographic proximity to the employee that aligns with the employee's skills and can be performed without compromising the employee's recovery or safety.

#### Vocational Rehabilitation

Vocational Rehabilitation services may consist of skills upgrading, on-the-job-training, job search preparation, and a variety of other services. The goal of any vocational rehabilitation plan is always to return the employee to their pre-injury employment, but where this is not possible, to similar/suitable employment.