

# LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AGRICULTURAL CENTER

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Revision: 1

## TRANSITIONAL RETURN TO WORK POLICY

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### **Purpose**

To state the LSU Agricultural Center's policy on transitional return to work following illness or injury covered by Workers Compensation, as required by the Louisiana State Office of Risk Management (ORM).

### **General Policy**

The LSU Agricultural Center recognizes that it is mutually beneficial for employees and the AgCenter when employees return to work as soon as medically permissible. To that end, the AgCenter will consider all available options for returning employees suffering work related injuries or illnesses to duty, including temporary detail to a modified duty assignment. All actions taken will be in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

The Return to Work Policy shall be reviewed with all new hires during the new hire orientation process and shall be reviewed by all employees at least every five years thereafter.

### **Procedures**

Employees who are absent due to illness or injury covered by this policy will provide medical certification in accordance with the provisions of AgCenter PS-34 "Medical Certification Requirements." Such certification shall specify any restrictions or limitations which prevent him/her from returning to full duty. Re-certification will be required periodically thereafter, as required by the unit head or HRM. Fitness for duty information is to be provided directly to the employee's unit head. The unit head will forward a copy to Human Resource Management.

The unit head, in conjunction with Human Resource Management, will coordinate efforts to facilitate the employee's return to his/her regular position, with or without modification, or to an alternative duty position. The AgCenter's Human Resource Management Office will assist in these efforts and may assist in obtaining other necessary administrative approvals, both internal and external.

Although every effort will be made to return an employee to duty as early as medically permissible, the AgCenter cannot guarantee alternative placement or the availability of a modified duty assignment.

### **Transitional Return to Work Team**

The LSU AgCenter will use a transitional return to work team to review all lost-time workers' compensation employees. The team's scope is to complete transitional return to work plans, review job modifications, perform job tasking and task identification, oversee plans, facilitate the success of plans, and report transitional return to work plan results. The team shall meet (or conference call) monthly or when an employee is injured. Team meetings are not necessary if there are no active lost time claims.

The Return To Work Team shall be composed at a minimum of a human resource management representative, the employee's unit head, and a claim adjuster for the ORM Third Party Administrator (TPA), an ORM TPA Return To Work Coordinator, and, if needed, an ORM TPA Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. Others who may be involved include the immediate supervisor, safety personnel, and other management personnel.

### **Transitional Return to Work Plan**

A transitional return to work plan should be completed with the unit head of the injured employee and will include the specific tasks identified, work schedule, duty assignment, and physical restrictions. The plan usually will be reviewed by the other team members.

When reviewing an individual worker's eligibility for return to work options, the following criteria should be followed:

1. Assess the job task of the worker's pre-injury position;
2. Identify transitional tasks that can be performed with the employee's current physical restrictions;
3. Review other services or tasks that can be performed which would improve the overall function of the unit; and,
4. Review tasks that can be performed that would return the employee to gainful employment.

Before the employee returns to work, the AgCenter will hold a return to work meeting (or conference call) with the employee to review the plan before the employee returns to work. Once the meeting has taken place, an offer of transitional duty employment shall be made to the injured employee in writing. The offer must include a specific return to work date and time, the duty assignment, and to whom to report. Transitional employment normally will not be provided for more than one year, and may be for a lesser period. Any extension beyond one year will require detailed justification and approval of an associate vice president or the vice president.

The employee is responsible for returning the medical certification to their unit head within one work day of receipt of the signed form from the treating physician. The employee must accept

the transitional return to work offer and report to work as requested in the return to work offer letter. The employee must work within the restrictions provided by the physician, comply with medical treatment, keep all scheduled medical appointments, and advise the unit head and ORM's TPA Return to Work Coordinator if the transitional work is physically too difficult.

The AgCenter shall not require the employee to perform the tasks that have been prohibited by the treating physician when the employee returns to work on a transitional return to work plan. The Return to Work Plan is evaluated periodically to assess the employee's ability to return to full duty or other changes in circumstances.

### **Separation of Employment**

The AgCenter will notify the ORM TPA if a person is at risk of termination due to exhaustion of sick leave. Human Resource Management will maintain documentation of failed transitional return to work employment, efforts made to identify transitional return to work tasks, and barriers in identifying transitional return to work. Documentation shall include evidence that transitional return to work tasks could not be identified, if applicable. These records will normally be confidential.

ORM'S TPA Return To Work Coordinator will be notified when an injured worker is removed from work or the accommodations are no longer available.

*Source: Senate Concurrent Resolution 50 of the 1997 Regular Legislative Session.*