

Managing Return to Work- Supervisors Participant Workbook



Return to Work Matters
THE RESOURCE FOR RETURN TO WORK PROFESSIONALS

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Chapter One: Getting Started

“Approximately 480,000 Australian workers experience a work related injury or illness each year. Each year, around 140,000 compensated work related injuries result in workers being away from work for one or more weeks. It is estimated that the cost to the economy of occupational health and safety exceeds \$20 billion every year. This does not include the incalculable social cost of the trauma suffered by victims and their families”, (2005) Safety in the Workplace Senator Rachel Siewert

It's no secret. Employees who feel they are valued and cared for are more motivated, responsible, and productive.

This workshop will help supervisors and managers create a workforce where employees are confident they will be cared for if a work injury occurs. In turn this results in a more cooperative, loyal and productive workplace.

This program is designed specifically to help managers and supervisors understand what employees with a work injury need, and to ensure the employee's recovery is supported and return to maximum function occurs as soon as is possible.

Learning Objectives

By the completion of this session, you will be able to:

- Identify problems and benefits associated with both effective and ineffective return to work programs.
- Demonstrate knowledge of variable courses of recovery.
- Identify factors that impede and assist employees with musculoskeletal problems.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the key elements of effective communication and any barriers that impede success.
- Identify when issues should be referred or further assistance sought.
- In complex return to work cases, participants will be able to identify barriers, show knowledge of the management tools available, and identify those members of the Return to Work team who can assist and when their assistance should be requested.
- Discuss the ways in which problem solving skills will assist in the return to work process.
- Demonstrate the importance of effective reintegration in the workplace.
- Identify factors that may indicate when a reintegration may be a concern.

What do you hope to achieve or take away from the session today?

Activity Methodology

As we look at each session today, you will be asked to contribute as an active participant to a variety of discussions and role plays that will provide you with opportunity to demonstrate the knowledge that you gain from today's training, and your prior experience in assisting injured or ill employees returning to work.

Using the Participant Guidebook

This guidebook has been designed to provide you with information and tools that you can use to assist an employee with an effective return to work.

There is additional amount of information contained within this guidebook that will not be covered today, but is there to provide you with further reading material following the conclusion of today's session.

Assessment Activities

There will be a number of activities and discussions throughout today that will be used to measure your competency level by your Instructor.

These activities may involve you completing role plays, taking part in small discussion groups, or taking part in a whole of group discussion.

Space for notes has been provided at the conclusion of each chapter. Please feel free to use this space to make notes and reminders to yourself.

Your Instructor

Your Instructor will take an active role in your session today. As you progress through each chapter, please take the opportunity to ask questions or clarify the subject matter with your Instructor when it is appropriate to do so.

Chapter Two: Your role as a supervisor

Your role as a supervisor to develop employees and monitor their performance puts you in a pivotal position to observe changes in behavior and the emergence of physical, mental and personal problems.

An unsettled working environment can cause unnecessary strain on individual members. One troubled employee can significantly affect the entire workplace. Prompt attention to developing problems can save a great deal in terms of personal difficulty for the employee as well as lost productivity.

As a supervisor, you are also held responsible for getting the job done, and for doing so safely, effectively and efficiently. Early recognition of problems, intervention and support during the early stages of treatment are keys to achieving effective results.

The current situation

Research has shown us that when attempting to deal with injured or ill employees and balance the daily stresses of management, supervisors are placed under a large amount of additional pressure.

The most common feelings experienced have been shown to be:

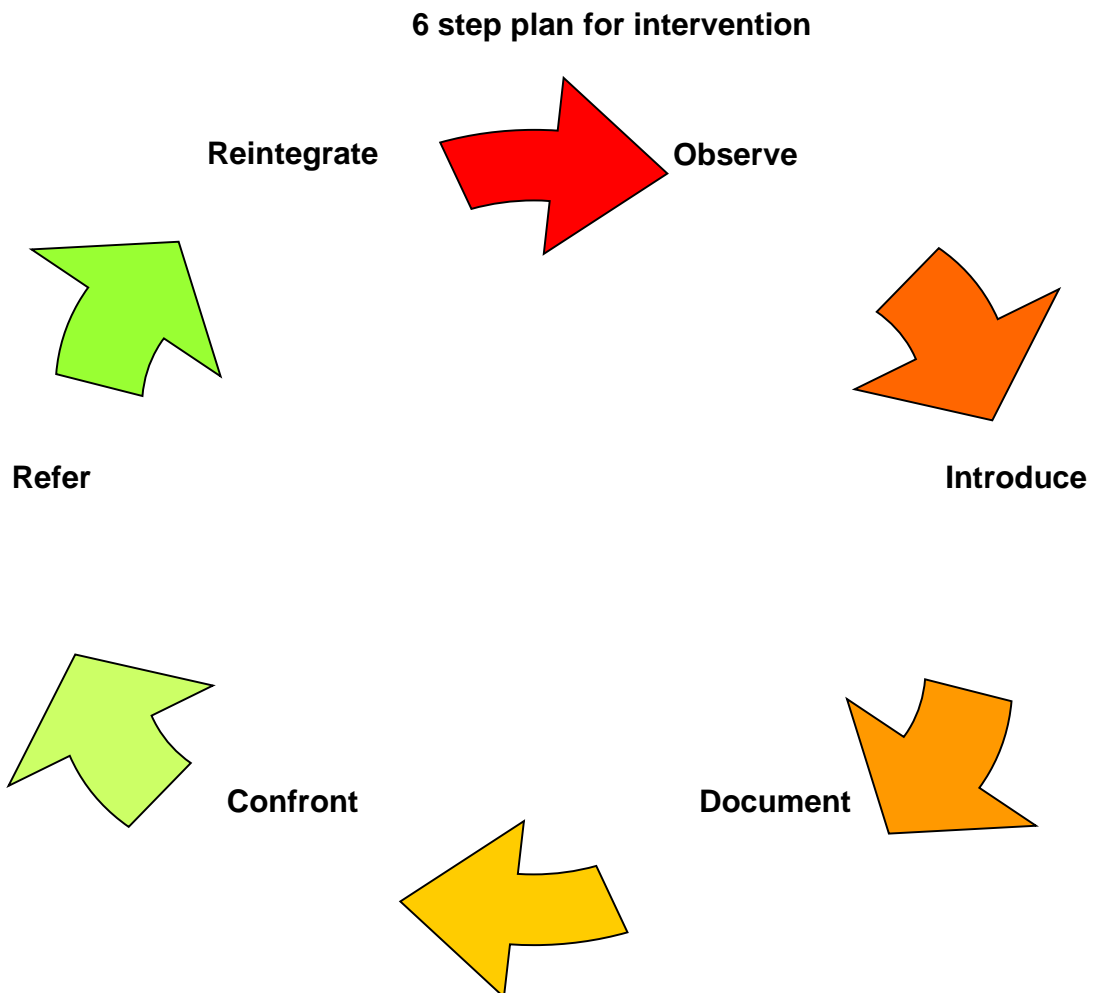
- Helpless and confused in the role as a supervisor.
- Angry or frustrated with a troubled employee for broken promises, repeated cover ups and increasing unreliability.
- Fearful of handling personal problems in the workplace.
- Feel guilt about putting more pressure on someone who is perceived to already have problems.
- A fear of confrontation, criticism or losing control.
- Uncertainty of how they are handling the situation.
- Uncertainty of how to communicate about personal issues with the employee.
- Taking on an employee's stresses and problems as their own.
- Emotions may be interfering with objective and constructive actions of both the employee and the remaining members of the immediate working environment.

- Frustration at balancing the additional time spent in supporting individual employee needs with the demands of time pressures, service standards and management expectations.

How will this course assist you in your role as a supervisor?

This course will provide you with information to assist you in resolving Return to Work issues that may be apparent in your workplace.

Throughout the session, we will discuss and work through areas that will enable you to draw up a personal six step plan for intervention. This is best shown as a cyclical diagram, as per the example below:



| Steps | Description |
|--------------------|--|
| Observe | Watch for any negative behaviors forming a pattern of symptoms in the workplace, i.e. a high absenteeism rate, low employee morale, reduced productivity. Observe and note ergonomic risks to employees. |
| Introduce | Identify and introduce ergonomic improvements and streamline processes to reduce the potential for injury. Promote the use of ergonomics in a safe and efficient work environment. |
| Document | Any dates and times you have observed both positive and/or negative behavior of a particular employee. |
| Confront | Provide employee with accurate feedback of their behavior. Be honest, share your concerns and base any example used to support your views on factual instances. Initiate discussions at an early stage, rather than wait for the problem to become larger. Address concerns as soon as they are raised or noted. |
| Refer | Initiate action with other members of the Return to Work team if required. Seek input from other areas and people than may be able to better assist in a particular aspect of the Return to Work. |
| Reintegrate | Integrate employee back to the workplace. Continue to monitor the return to work, provide open, honest and encouraging feedback, and actively focus on any improvements noted whenever possible. |

Subsequent benefits to you as the supervisor

Being able to return an employee to work in a safe and sustained manner has many resulting benefits.

As a supervisor, the following may be experienced:

- Reduced stress as employee productivity increases and set targets are met.
- Reduction of workplace accidents and illnesses as ergonomic principles are applied.
- Less staff turnover when an experienced team member is retained.
- Demonstrated leadership role within the company.
- Demonstration of a supportive and positive workplace culture.
- Increased skills in communicating effectively with others resulting in an open and trusting climate.