

**CONTRA COSTA COUNTY  
RETURN TO WORK POLICY  
FOR INJURY OR ILLNESS**

- I. POLICY: Permanent full-time or part-time employees, as well as temporary and contract employees who have suffered injuries and illnesses may be provided with such restricted duty as the County is able to provide as soon as medically appropriate. Probationary and seasonal employees are not covered by this policy.
  - A. A restricted duty assignment may be provided within the County's capacity, consistent with restriction(s) recommended by the treating physician. Should any disagreement exist, the County will follow California and Federal law. Restrictions from the physician must be in writing on the county form AK 142 or on the physician's letterhead.
  - B. Employees performing in a restricted duty assignment will continue to receive their regular pay and benefits for hours actually worked. Pay and benefits will be prorated in the case of part-time work, subject to MOU provisions and salary regulations.
- II. OBJECTIVE: The objectives of providing work for temporarily industrially injured employees through restricted duty are to reduce disability and Workers' Compensation costs, maximize productivity, minimize the loss of human resources and promote full and prompt recovery with the return of the employee to productive employment.
- III. SCOPE OF POLICY: All County departments and Board-governed agencies which are part of the County retirement system are subject to this Return to Work Policy.
- IV. GENERAL BACKGROUND: A restricted duty assignment is a temporary assignment provided to a temporarily disabled employee. Restricted duty may be for less than regular full-time work.
  - A. A temporarily disabled employee shall return to a restricted duty assignment that is not inconsistent with restrictions recommended by the employee's treating physician or Qualified Medical Examiner (QME), if applicable.
  - B. A Department shall, whenever feasible, temporarily restrict the duties of an employee in order to conform to restrictions recommended by the treating physician for a cumulative maximum of six months per injury with a review after three (3) months or sooner, if appropriate. At the end of the six month period, the employee shall undergo a medical review to determine whether a full duty work release is possible. If full release is not possible,

the employee shall be referred to the Risk Management ADA Coordinator and/or the Return to Work Committee for evaluation.

- C. In the event that an employee disagrees with the Department Head's decision concerning a light duty assignment, he/she may appeal that decision to the Risk Manager within 15 calendar days. The subject of the appeal shall be heard at the next regularly scheduled Return to Work Committee. The Return to Work Committee may affirm, reject or modify the Department Head's decision. The following factors shall be considered by the Return to Work Committee when considering an appeal:
1. The restrictions recommended by the employee's treating physician or QME, if applicable;
  2. The operational and financial needs of the department; and
  3. The availability of a suitable work assignment.

Either party may appeal the Committee's decision in writing to the Director of Human Resources or his/her designee within 15 calendar days of the Committee's decision.

V. RESPONSIBILITIES:

A. Departments

The principle responsibility for implementing the Return to Work Policy rests with the appointing authority. Departments will also:

1. Complete and submit an injury report for industrial injuries and illnesses on a timely basis.
2. Appoint a Departmental Return to Work Coordinator to administer the department's compliance with the Return to Work Policy under the direction of the department head. The Departmental Return to Work Coordinator shall review restricted duty assignments and make recommendations to the department head regarding adjusting, extending or terminating the restricted duty in accordance with the operational and financial needs of the department and consistent with the employee's medical restrictions. The Department Return to Work Coordinator will document and monitor all limited duty assignments on the County AK143 for Attachment 3. They will also maintain a centralized record of all assignments.
3. Inform department employees of the Return to Work Policy.

4. Implement restricted duty assignments for temporarily disabled employees as soon as medically appropriate, operationally feasible, and when a suitable assignment is available.
5. Coordinate with Risk Management regarding an individual employee's restricted duty assignment.
6. The Department Return to Work Coordinator shall provide the Health Coalition quarterly reports of the number of requests for ergonomic evaluations, the number of evaluations performed, and the actions taken based on those reports. The County shall meet with the Health Coalition upon the Coalition's request to review such reports and to discuss ergonomic issues.

B. Employee

A temporarily disabled employee shall:

1. Notify the department of an industrial or non-industrial injury or illness.
2. If it is an industrial injury, seek prompt medical care through the County's Occupational Medical Program or through a properly pre-designated physician in accordance with the law. The employee shall obtain needed medical information from the physician and provide that information to the County. (Physician's Statement of Ability to Work, AK142, see attachment 1 for industrial injuries and attachment 2 for non-industrial injuries).
3. Accept an appropriate available restricted duty assignment within or outside the employee's department if one is offered. A restricted duty assignment must be consistent with limitations recommended by the employee's treating physician or QME, if applicable, and must be approved by the Departmental Return to Work Coordinator. If an employee is assigned to a restricted duty assignment outside of their department, a supervisor in the department providing the restricted duty assignment shall supervise the employee. The employee's home department is required to pay the employee's regular salary.
4. A department head has the authority to temporarily restrict the duties of an employee in accordance with this policy.
5. For accepted industrial injuries, failure of an employee to accept an offer of a medically appropriate restricted duty assignment will result in the denial of temporary disability benefits pursuant to Workers' Compensation law.

C. County Return to Work Coordinators

The County Return to Work Coordinators shall:

1. Work at the direction of the Risk Manager.
2. Assist departments in identifying and developing suitable restricted duty assignments.
3. Assist departments in resolving questions regarding work restrictions and restricted duty placements.
4. Provide, as necessary, counseling and other rehabilitative services to employees placed on restricted duty.
5. Assist in finding restricted duty assignments outside of the home department, if the home department cannot provide restricted duty. The home department will provide the salary of the employee.
6. Coordinate the appeal process for employees regarding restricted duty.

D. Return to Work Committee

The Return to Work Committee shall hear appeals under the Appeal Procedures as described in Section IV (C)-General Background above, and make recommendations to the department head. In the event a department does not grant a restricted duty assignment requested by an employee or a requested extension of an existing restricted duty assignment, the employee may appeal to the Return to Work Committee. The Committee shall hear the appeal and make a recommendation to the department head.

E. Risk Manager

The County Risk Manager shall:

Oversee the administration of this policy and provide ongoing education of department heads, managers, and departmental return to work coordinators concerning this policy.

VI. DEFINITIONS:

- A. Restricted Duty: A temporary work assignment provided to a temporarily industrially disabled employee who cannot perform her/his regular job duties for a specific period of time. The temporary assignment is provided while an individual is recuperating from an industrial injury or illness. An employee will be assigned to restricted duty within their primary department whenever possible. If no assignment can be located within the employee's primary department, the County will make reasonable efforts to locate a comparable

position in another department. Restricted duty is only available to a person who is expected to return to her or his regular job duties. If an employee is on a discretionary 9/80 or 4/10 work schedule and is returning to restricted duty assignment on a part-time basis, the 9/80 or 4/10 work schedule shall be revoked. Pay for restricted duty shall be the same salary and benefits of the employee's regular position, provided however, that shift and other pay differentials will only be paid for the first thirty (30) days of restricted duty unless the employee qualifies for pay differentials.

- B. County: For the purpose of this policy the term "County" includes Contra Costa County and agencies governed by the Board of Supervisors, which are part of the County's retirement system, excluding Housing Authority, and In-Home Supportive Service providers.
- C. Departmental Return to Work Coordinator: The individual appointed by the department head to administer the County's Return to Work policy. The person appointed by the department must have some knowledge of personnel rules and regulations, Memoranda of Understanding and disability benefits that an employee may be entitled to receive, i.e., SDI, LTD, FMLA, retirement.
- D. Employee's Treating Physician: The treating physician or Qualified Medical Examiner (QME) as defined by California Worker's Compensation laws. Treatment shall be reasonably required and consistent with Workers' Compensation guidelines and existing State law.

For non-industrial injuries, the County will follow the regulations of both the EEOC and DFEH on the issue of temporary modified duty.

- E. Return to Work Committee: The Committee shall be composed of a pool of twelve (12) members consisting of six (6) County employee members appointed by the County Administrator and six (6) County employees appointed from the three (3) largest employee organization in the Labor Coalition. Each member of the committee must commit to attending at least two committee meetings each year. Two members appointed by the County Administrator and two members appointed by the employee organization must be present in order to constitute a quorum.
- F. Risk Manager: The person designated by the County Administrator to serve as Risk Manger.
- G. County Return to Work Coordinators: The person designated by the County Risk Manager to serve as an Employee Return to Work Coordinator who shall perform the duties set forth in V (C).