

**Workers' Compensation—
Early Return to Work/Transitional Return to Duty**

Applicability

This policy applies to LSS employees. SSP employees will follow the Department of Education policy.

Policy

It is the policy of LSS to participate in the effective rehabilitation and treatment of employees injured on the job. LSS will attempt to provide early return to work (transitional return to duty) placements or temporary light duty assignments when an employee is not able to return to his/her full, normal job duties after being injured on the job but does have a physician's certification that the employee can return to work in some capacity. In conjunction with the Louisiana Office of Risk Management's (ORM) Return to Transitional Duty Plan, LSS sets forth our commitment to return workers who have suffered a job-related injury or illness back to gainful employment as soon as it is medically possible. LSS cannot guarantee placement and is under no obligation to offer, create, or encumber any specific position for purposes of offering placement.

Our goals are as follows:

- 1) Provide employees who have suffered occupational injuries or illnesses with the earliest possible safe return to work.
- 2) Give employees more options in returning to work after occupational injury or illness without a full duty medical release.
- 3) Retain qualified employees, thereby utilizing their expertise, training, and experience.
- 4) Facilitate a safer working environment by taking more responsibility for injured workers.
- 5) Reduce medical costs and lost time payments of Workers' Compensation claims by returning employees to transitional services and reducing extended work absences.
- 6) Reduce indemnity payments of Workers' Compensation claims by allowing employees to perform transitional services for the citizens of Louisiana.

An employee or a supervisor or School or Division Director who wishes to invoke this policy should contact Human Resources.

Louisiana's ORM has the responsibility for the administration of claims for medical and disability benefits to employees who are injured on the job and the coordination of the transitional return to work

program, including temporary light duty or limited duty assignments. ORM will work in close cooperation with the school's Transitional Return to Work Team, consisting of the Human Resources Director or Administrator, Human Resources staff member serving as the school's Workers' Compensation Coordinator, and the applicable supervisor, Department, or Division Head. The Appointing Authority shall make all final decisions regarding placement.

Reasonable efforts will be made to place returning employees into meaningful assignments which they can perform while on temporary light or transitional duty. All decisions will be made based upon medical prognosis and recovery. Any transitional work assignment made available to an injured employee will be pursuant to the informed medical opinion of the injured employee's treating physician and said transitional work assignments will be available until the employee attains maximum medical improvement but cannot exceed a period of one year.

It is the responsibility of ORM to communicate with the treating medical personnel and secure all necessary reports and approvals for temporary light duty/transitional return to work assignments. It is the responsibility of the school's Transitional Return to Work Team to assess individual situations by meeting with ORM staff and/or rehabilitation counselors, reviewing the injured worker's job duties, reviewing the attending physician's report of physical limitations, and determining if there are transitional duties that can be performed under the employee's current job description. If transitional/light duties cannot be performed under the current job description, the Team will consider other duties within the school that the employee could perform in order to transition him/her back to full time work status in his/her regular position. Criteria for temporary placement in other positions will include the qualifications, experience, and abilities of the injured employee. For classified employees, a Detail to Special Duty in accordance with applicable Civil Service Rules may be considered. First priority for any temporary placement will be within the employee's normal Division of the school. Second priority will be in a division with related assignments.

Once an injured employee is returned to work on a temporary or transitional basis, periodic meetings will be held by the Team to assess the progress being made by the employee in order to return him/her to full work capacity in his/her regular position as soon as possible.

In the event that a decision is made by the school and ORM that the school cannot accommodate the employee with a temporary light duty or transitional return to work assignment, the employee will continue to be eligible for worker's compensation benefits in accordance with applicable laws.

Should an employee be unable to return to duty (temporary light duty, transitional return to work, or at full capacity) and has exhausted all applicable leave, he/she may be non-disciplinarily separated from employment.

Once an offer is made to the injured employee of a temporary light duty or transitional return to work assignment that meets the medical limitations, the employee is expected to report for duty as assigned. Failure to accept the assignment or report as instructed may cause a limitation or termination of any further worker's compensation benefits and may result in appropriate disciplinary action up to and including termination.

The Human Resources Department shall maintain all appropriate records of worker's compensation claims. Records will include the number of injured workers per month, the number of loss-time days

associated with workers' compensation injuries, and the number of workers returned to work. A monthly status report will be provided to the Office of Risk Management, Loss Prevention section.