



## **Returning Employees to Work—Sooner and More Productively**

### **Why Should You Be Concerned About Return to Work?**

- The financial impact of employee absences is great, and can cost an employer 35% of payroll in direct or indirect costs
- Other workforce-related impacts include:
  - Adding to the workload of other employees (90%)
  - Disrupting the work of others (80%)
  - Increasing stress (78%)
  - Hurting morale (68%)
  - Reducing the quality of work output (59%)

Source: Mercer/Kronos “Survey on the Total Impact of Employee Absences” 2010

### **Why Employees Don’t Return to Work**

Complicating Factor #1: Depression

Complicating Factor #2: Psychosocial issues

Complicating Factor #3: Work-related issues

### **Psychosocial Barriers for Return to Work to Consider:**

- Depression (pre-existing and/or co-morbid and claim-related)
- Stress reaction and anxiety
- Marital and relationships
- Family and children
- Workplace conflict
- Chemical dependency
- Anger issues
- Grief and loss
- Financial and legal issues
- Ongoing medical issues, e.g., chronic pain, musculoskeletal issues, need for follow-up, ongoing treatment or therapy
- Need for retraining or workplace accommodation
- Previous work-related conflict

## **Healthy Return to Work Plan: Where to Start, What to Monitor and How to Maintain Productivity**

- Get employees back to work sooner by taking an integrated approach to addressing the issues surrounding their reasons for absence
- Once employees return to work, work on preventing additional absences by addressing the issues that may cause them to be distracted or less productive:
  - Work-related, e.g., workplace issues, need for accommodations
  - Personal, e.g., depression, stress, family/relationship, legal, financial, etc.

### **Using an Integrated Approach: Best Practices**

Initially, an experienced and trained Return to Work counselor will reach out to the employee and conduct a thorough intake assessment. Based upon the needs identified, the counselor and employee will develop a return to work plan that may include:

- Counseling support related to the issues surrounding their leave and return to work-specific issues
- Referrals to EAP services that can help with identified issues such as marital/relationship, family and work-related concerns, legal and financial problems, chemical dependency and other mental and behavioral health issues
- Coordination with disability and workers' comp case managers, or medical providers, as appropriate and with employee permission
- Coordination and planning with employer representatives on requested accommodations and other workplace issues, again as appropriate and with employee

Ongoing counselor-initiated phone support should continue until the employee returns to work and/or other mutually agreed-upon resolution

### **Return to Work Coaching Services Outcomes and Goals**

Success or resolution is measured by the following results:

- A return to work plan with specific target dates
- Follow-through with counseling recommendations

THEN:

- Return to work (FT or PT), productively and without undue absences OR
- Voluntary removal from the labor market OR
- Reduction in benefit payments

### **Questions?**

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