

Return to work planning: No job? No employer accommodation? Here's what to do...

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As is the case with any return to work planning, your goal is to return your client to his current job, or modified work with his current employer, as early as appropriate, however, sometimes this can be easier said than done. Even with the best intentions on your part—as well as the part of your client and the employer—challenges arise.

To ensure a solid foundation for any return to work planning, it is important to have a Job Site Analysis (JSA) and a Functional Abilities Evaluation (FAE) on file so that there is objective documentation about the work demands versus your client's abilities:

- JSA: determines the physical, environmental, cognitive, and ergonomic factors of a job.
- FAE: determines the client's ability to safely perform various job functions so that based on the results of the JSA, the FAE provides insight into what components of a job are within the client's abilities versus what components require restrictions and/or modifications.

Based on the results of the JSA and FAE, if you find yourself in one of the following situations, you have options:

You have a medical release to return to work but the job is no longer available.

- If the JSA and FAE indicate that the job demands meet your client's abilities and accordingly, he is "work ready" but a job is no longer available at his current employer, it is your client's responsibility to find suitable employment.
- Your client's chances of finding suitable employment, particularly in today's job market, can be significantly enhanced through vocational services such as a Transferable Skills Analysis, Labour Market Survey, and Job Search Training Program.

*You have a medical release to return to work
but the employer will not accommodate modified hours or duties.*

- If the JSA and FAE indicate that the job does not match your client's current abilities, initiate a Work/Physical Conditioning program so your client can work toward meeting the job demands.
- Once your client successfully achieves full hours and duties in the program, he is "work ready" and can return to his job with regular hours and duties.

For an overview of the options available regarding return to work planning, please see the attachment.



Return to Work Services

Job Site Analysis (JSA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assesses the physical, environmental, cognitive, and ergonomic factors related to a specific job so that the client's abilities and limitations (i.e., based on the results of a Functional Abilities Evaluation) can be compared to the job requirements to identify whether the client is "job ready" or requires accommodation like modified tasks or hours.
Ergonomic Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyzes the client in the work environment including positioning the client correctly, making workstation modifications as necessary, educating about proper positioning, recommending equipment as appropriate (usually conducted in an office setting but sometimes also appropriate for an industrial environment).
Functional Abilities Evaluation (FAE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involves measuring, recording and analysing client's ability to safely perform numerous job-related functions, such as lifting, lowering, pushing, pulling, and carrying weights, stair climbing, sitting, standing, bending, stooping, crouching, kneeling, crawling, and fine motor manipulation. If facility-based, it specifically tests job-related functions that the client must perform to provide "baseline" functional information for all parties (i.e., insurer, employer, treating practitioner, and rehabilitation facility). If home-based, it assesses functional abilities in the client's home to make recommendations about the ability to complete daily activities.
Insurer Examination (IE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> JSA or FAE may recommend an IE to provide documentation regarding the client's ability to return to work and/or any restrictions. Based on the Assessor's determination of impairment and prediction of healing, the IE can also assist in the creation of a return to work schedule.
Work Hardening/Physical Conditioning Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes a gradual progression of work-related activities and exercises designed to simulate job demands. In a monitored environment, the program focuses on building the strength, skills, and endurance required to meet the job demands. Through a graduated approach, the client works toward eventually being able to complete all job demands and job hours.
Functional Restoration Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Similar to a Work Hardening/Physical Conditioning Program; a systematic and monitored regimen of work-related exercises and activities that simulate job demands to help the client gradually build the skills for a successful transition back to work. It also focuses on preparing the client psychologically for return to work through education regarding pain management and developing positive coping skills.

<p>Vocational Assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Necessary when the client needs to investigate alternative employment options either by directly entering a new type of work or via formal re-training. It identifies suitable jobs/occupations by identifying the client's personal vocational characteristics through evaluation of learning ability, academic achievements, vocational aptitudes, and employment history. It incorporates medical, social and sometimes psychological information when assessing the suitability of different types of jobs/occupations. Also helps the client better understand his/her skills and to take a more realistic approach to potential employment opportunities.
<p>Labour Market Survey</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involves surveying potential employers specific to the client's identified job/occupation. This outreach is combined with additional research via databases, internet, employment periodicals, about potential employers, job availability in desired geographic region(s), and salary information to provide a comprehensive overview of the job market specific to the client's identified job/occupation.
<p>Job Search Training Programs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides the client with the necessary skills to be marketable and secure employment (e.g., developing a resumé and networking list, contacting potential employers and interview skills). Based on individual and group instruction depending on the client's specific issues/needs.
<p>Job Placement Programs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides direct recruitment to potential employers to help the client secure and maintain employment. Continuous contact is made with potential employers to obtain up-to-date information about job opportunities, market trends and salary ranges. Upon successful job placement, follow-up calls are made to both the client and employer to monitor progress and enhance job success.
<p>Psychological Vocational Assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies a client's return to work potential and/or assesses loss of earning capacity. Can be arranged as soon as it is determined that the client will be unable to return to his/her pre-accident work, either due to physical or psychological limitations. Should also be considered when there is a diagnosed or suspected diagnosable psychological condition that may interfere with the client's return to work program.
<p>Neuropsychological Vocational Assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combines neuropsychological and psychological vocational evaluations to address both diagnostic issues and vocational questions in the context of a confirmed or suspected traumatic brain injury or other neurocognitive pathology. Identifies the client's personal and vocational characteristics by assessing general learning ability (intelligence), academic achievement levels (reading, spelling, arithmetic), emotional status, personality characteristics and vocation-related aptitude/interests. Current vocational aptitude is compared to prior occupational history to determine the most appropriate basis for the transferable skills.