

A Supervisor's Guide to Supporting a Team Member After a Workplace Injury

Why Communication Matters

Supportive communication should be part of everyday workplace culture — but especially when an employee is injured or ill and away from work. These conversations reduce isolation, support recovery, and create the foundation for a successful return to work.

Before You Chat: Prepare

- **Do you have the time?** Ensure you're present and not distracted.
- **Does your employee have time?** Ask if it's a good time to talk — respect their schedule.
- **Know about available supports.** Be aware of resources such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), community services, and company policies.

During the Conversation

- **Be relaxed and open.** Ask, "Are you okay? Do you have support? How can I help?"
- **Listen actively.** Don't rush or interrupt. Silence is okay.
- **Show empathy.** Reassure them that they are supported and valued.
- **Keep them connected.** Invite them to team events and share workplace news.
- **Encourage activity.** Even light engagement helps reduce isolation and speeds recovery.
- **Set a communication plan.** Decide together how often to check in and by what method (e.g., phone, email, text).

Avoid

- Probing for a diagnosis
- Sharing unrelated personal experiences
- Making assumptions or accusations

Return to Work Conversations

When discussing modified or alternate duties, ask:

- “What tasks do you feel confident doing?”
- “Are there any tasks that would be difficult for you?”
- “What would help make your return to work successful?”
- “What support do you need from me as your supervisor?”

After They Return to Work

- **Check in regularly.** Ask how things are going and identify any new barriers.
- **Be flexible.** Adjust the plan as needed..
- **Communicate.** Delays in employer responses to the WSCC can hold up claims.
- **Be involved and informed.** Learn the WSCC claims process — being informed and engaged helps everyone.
- **Maintain boundaries.** Never probe into treatments or tests. Medical details are private unless the worker chooses to share.

Remember

- Workers are not required to share medical information.
- Respect privacy and build trust through respectful dialogue.
- If your workplace has a Return-to-Work Program, follow it — and use: [WSCC Guidance](#)

Don't Make Assumptions

- A medical note may not always relate to the work injury.
- Always request the **Functional Abilities Form (FAF)** to assess duties.
- If challenges arise, contact the WSCC claim owner for help finding safe and practical solutions.



Better Outcomes Come from Collaborative Workplaces

Employers who see the **whole picture** — not just job titles — create more opportunities for injured workers to contribute and recover. Supervisors are often best positioned to lead conversations with compassion and timeliness. If your company uses HR or OHS representatives for disability, it is still important that you maintain communication with your worker.



Online Resources

If your employer or company doesn't have a formal return to work program, you can find a sample plan and other resources on the WSCC website — [Return to Work Plan | WSCC | Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission](#)

Need Help?

We're here to support you. For questions about a specific claim or general return-to-work guidance, contact: info@wsc.nt.ca or NWT: **1-800-661-0792** or Nunavut: **1-877-404-4407**