


# Practical Guide to the Return to Work Support Program



Prepared for the Staff of the Non-Public Funds, CF

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THE  
**Great-West Life**  
ASSURANCE  COMPANY

**MORNEAU  
SHEPELL** 

## ***Purpose***

Statistics have shown that the chances of long term recovery are significantly affected the longer the employee is absent from work and/or the longer the employee is not on an optimal treatment program for his/her condition. As such, the purpose of this program is to provide tools and resources to support eligible employees in their recovery and a sustainable return to work when they have been absent due to a non-work related illness or injury. Your Employer, the Staff of the Non-Public Funds, Canadian Forces (NPF) recognizes that both employees and managers/supervisors need support and assistance during such times.

The goal of the program is to support employee recovery from illness or injury by improving access to appropriate medical services and facilitating a safe, healthy, and sustainable return to work to achieve greater workforce continuity and productivity.

## ***Great-West/Morneau Shepell***

Great-West/Morneau Shepell are leading providers of services that help employees and organizations manage health and wellness. Experienced Case Managers offer support and professional expertise to guide employees throughout the recovery and return to work process.

## ***Employee and Family Assistance Program***

Shepell.fgi is the service provider for the Employee and Family Assistance Program. While Shepell.fgi and Morneau Shepell do work in conjunction with each other, medical information provided to the Employee and Family Assistance Program will not be released to Great West/Morneau Shepell without employee consent.

## ***Credentials of the Case Manager***

The Case Manager is an experienced health professional holding qualifications in areas such as nursing, occupational health, occupational therapy. The Case Manager is your central point of contact for information related to the medical leave.

It is the role of the Case Manager to review the medical information, functional limitations and job-related information to identify whether the medical condition requires time away from work, the amount of time away from work, and if there are opportunities for alternate work arrangements.

Along with the support/non-support recommendations, the Case Manager works with both the Employer and the employee to establish an appropriate return to work plan, and identifies whether additional support is required to assist the employee's rehabilitation.

## ***Eligibility***

All full-time employees working in Canada eligible for paid sick leave and/or enrolled in the Long Term Disability program who are absent from work for a period greater than 5 consecutive working days due to a non-occupational illness or injury.

## ***Return to Work Support Program***

When an eligible full-time employee is absent or expected to be absent from work for a period greater than 5 consecutive working days as a result of a non-occupational illness, injury, or surgery, the employee obtains the program information and the case is referred to Great-West/Morneau Shepell.

## ***Overview of the Return to Work Support Program***

1. The Great-West/Morneau Shepell Case Manager contacts the employee to discuss the Return to Work Support Program as it relates to the employee's particular situation, including program requirements.
2. The employee makes the necessary arrangements to have the signed Employee Statement and completed Attending Physician Statement submitted to the Case Manager. Accordingly, employees take all necessary steps to meet this requirement and, if unable to do so, advise the Case Manager as soon as possible.
3. The completed Attending Physician Statement provides the Case Manager with information that helps determine eligibility for paid sick leave and the best way to approach the employee's health condition, recovery and eventual return to work. It also helps determine if the employee was medically unable to work and under treatment by the physician during the period of absence.
4. The Case Manager works with the employee, Employer and the employee's attending physician to clarify the expected return to work date and determine if additional support is required to ensure that the employee returns at the optimum time.
5. This additional support may include any one, or a combination of, the following:
  - Consultation with the employee's attending physician by an occupational physician;
  - Independent evaluations to facilitate a clearer understanding of the employee's health related risks, recovery potential and options for symptom management that would support the employees' return to a more usual activity level;
  - Coordination with a return to work facilitator to hold a problem solving meeting with the Employer regarding more complex return to work planning issues;
  - Referral to counselling to address issues related to work readiness and resilience.
6. The Case Manager provides a recommendation to the Employer regarding support for the employee's recovery and outlines appropriate return to work arrangements.

### ***Basis for the approval of the sick leave benefit***

For the purposes of sick leave, disability is assessed on the basis of the duties the employee regularly performed for the employer as part of their own pre-disability job.

Employees are considered disabled if, because of disease or injury, there is no combination of duties the employee can perform that regularly takes at least 60% of the employee's time at work to complete.

### ***Confidentiality of medical information***

Medical information is **always** considered confidential and is **not** shared with the Employer. Throughout the process, Great-West/Morneau Shepell provides status updates regarding the employee's limitations and the return to work plan to the Employer – without sharing the medical details. Medical information is used only by Great-West/Morneau Shepell to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the employee's situation. The employee is always asked to provide written consent (using the Employee Statement) for communication and information exchange to allow the process to begin.

### ***Roles within the Return to Work Support Program:***

Collaboration and role clarity are essential to the Return to Work Support Program (RTWSP). The following is an overview of the roles and responsibilities within this program:

#### **Employee:**

- On the 1<sup>st</sup> working day of absence, must call (or leave voice/text/email message) your immediate Manager/Supervisor before regularly scheduled start time to notify them that you are going to be absent, reason for absence, expected return to work date, and contact number at which you can be reached.
- Submit a sick leave request on-line via Workforce or fill out and submit Request for Leave form, if able to, or have Manager/Supervisor complete and submit the form
- Continually consider the potential for your absence to exceed 5 consecutive working days and take the appropriate actions to meet the RTWSP requirements (e.g. obtain and review Employee Info Package, contact physician to arrange for completion of the Attending Physician Statement, etc.)
- As soon as your absence is expected to exceed 5 consecutive working days,
  - Obtain and review the Employee Information Package, and plan for the required completion and submission of the Employee Statement and Attending Physician Statement (e.g. contact physician to arrange for completion of Attending Physician Statement, schedule an appointment, etc.)

**Note:** The **Employee Information Package** (Employee letter, Practical Guide, Physician letter, Attending Physician Statements and Employee Statement) is available online on the NPF Website (i.e. NPF HR Website, NPF Employee Zone, Workforce Self Service site). Alternately, if you are unable to access and print these documents while absent, you are encouraged to keep a copy of the Employee Package at home or obtain it by mail/email/fax or personal pick-up from your local HR Office or Manager/Supervisor.

- Notify your Manager/Supervisor of your anticipated continued absence and the steps taken to fulfill RTWSP requirements
- Inform Manager/Supervisor of any difficulties in fulfilling RTWSP requirements
- Provide the necessary documentation (e.g. *Employee Statement, Attending Physician Statement*) to Great-West/Morneau Shepell as soon as possible but no later than the 10<sup>th</sup> consecutive working day since the 1<sup>st</sup> day of absence. Note: You are responsible to pay the fees associated with completing RTWSP medical forms. For unionized employees, please refer to the Collective Agreement or related Memorandums of

Understanding to determine if there are any provisions relating to the cost of producing medical information

- For planned surgery with an anticipated recovery of greater than 5 working days, notify your Manager/Supervisor of the start date of the planned absence and obtain the Employee Information Package prior to the start date. In most cases, the Employee Statement and Attending Physician Statement should be completed and submitted by date of surgery.
- Provide any additional medical documentation to Great-West/Morneau Shepell as soon as possible but no later than the deadline date provided by your Case Manager. Not meeting this deadline may impact the potential payment of your sick leave. Note: You are also responsible for the payment of fees for the completion of additional medical documentation.
- Participate fully in the program and your recovery process, in particular by seeking appropriate treatment and care.
- Maintain ongoing communication with the Great-West/Morneau Shepell Case Manager and your Manager/Supervisor and/or Human Resources.
- Participate positively in any Return to Work efforts and follow the Return to Work plan outlined by the Case Manager.
- Advise the Case Manager if your medical condition changes.

### **Manager/Supervisor:**

- When the employee reports an unexpected or planned (e.g. surgery) absence due to a non-occupational illness or injury, gather the following information: reason for the absence (e.g. personal illness or injury), expected date of return to work, contact number at which the employee can be reached  
  
**Note:** If the employee has left a voice/text/email to report the absence without complete details, contact the employee to gather the above details.
- Remind employee that if the absence is expected to or does exceed 5 consecutive working days, he/she will be referred to the RTWSP by the local Human Resources office and should make the appropriate plans to obtain the Employee Information Package, and become familiar with and meet the RTWSP requirements.
- Advise the employee to call back if the return to work date changes.
- Determine if sick leave (up to 5 working days) is approved.
- Submit a sick leave request on-line via Workforce or complete a Request for Leave

form (if the employee is unable to do so themselves) and approve.

- Provide approved Leave form to Human Resources as required.
- Advise Human Resources if an employee's absence has or is expected to go beyond 5 consecutive working days and provide all relevant information.
- Make timely decisions regarding employee absences, leave and RWT plan, based upon recommendations of Case Manager.

**Note:** In exceptional cases, if the Manager/Supervisor has concerns about the recommendations of the Case Manager relating to the support or non-support of sick leave requests, the Manager/Supervisor can escalate the request, through their chain of command, to their Division Head who will consult with Human Resources and, if appropriate, the Case Manager to determine the way ahead.

- Ensure approved sick leave is recorded (for e.g. complete Leave form and ensure approved leave is entered in Workforce).
- Respond to Case Manager or Human Resources requests for information in a timely manner.
- Be available to participate in telephone interview with Case Manager to discuss details of the employee's duties and return to work barriers.
- Attend or positively participate in a Return to Work Facilitation Meeting.
- Make decisions regarding and facilitate transitional work or gradual return to work, when appropriate, based upon recommendations of the Case Manager.
- Support employee's safe and timely return to work by understanding employee restrictions and limitations.
- Notify Human Resources when there are changes in the organizational and workplace situation.
- Assess the availability of modified work/hours when necessary. Make a decision, according to the Employer's Delegation of HR Authority, regarding the approval of the RTW plan including any modifications in hours of work or duties.
- Monitor employee at work and ensure the employee works only the duties/hours as outlined. Report concerns or any changes to Return to Work schedule to HR immediately.
- Contact Human Resources if an employee requests leave other than sick leave while absent from work due to a non-work related illness or injury or during Return to Work schedule.
- Maintain ongoing communication with the employee, Case Manager, and Human

Resources.

### **Human Resources:**

- Refer all cases that exceed or are expected to exceed the threshold of 5 consecutive working days to Great West/Morneau Shepell.
- Advise and provide support to Manager/Supervisor throughout process.
- Obtain decisions from Manager/Supervisor regarding employee absences, leave and RTW plan.
- Provide overall management and administration of the Return to Work Support Program.
- Respond to issues that relate to the Employer's HR policies.
- Participate in problem solving related to return to work issues.
- Coordinate payment of approved sick leave benefits in ACCERO.
- Maintain communication with the employee, Case Manager, and Manager/Supervisor.

### **Great-West/Morneau Shepell Case Manager**

- Contact the employee to discuss the Return to Work Support Program as it relates to the employee's particular situation, including program requirements.
- Provide expertise, a problem solving structure, and the coordination of resources that support the employees' recovery and return to work.
- Determine if the medical information supports the employee's absence from work.
- Maintain ongoing communication with, and support for, the employee throughout the recovery and return to work/sick leave process.
- Maintain ongoing communication with Human Resources and Manager/Supervisor.



## **RETURN TO WORK SUPPORT PROGRAM – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**1. What is an Attending Physician Statement and why must an employee have it completed?**

The completed Attending Physician Statement is the medical certificate needed to support requests for sick leave in excess of 5 consecutive working days. The Attending Physician Statement also provides the case manager with information to help determine how the employee can be supported in their recovery and eventual return to work. The medical information contained in the Attending Physician Statement will be kept confidential and will not be shared with the Employer. For unionized employees, please refer to the Collective Agreement or related Memorandums of Understanding to determine if there are any provisions relating to the cost of producing medical information

**2. Should an employee be concerned about not being approved sick leave if they are medically unable to work for periods longer than 5 consecutive working days?**

If an employee sees a physician by the 6<sup>th</sup> working day of absence and ensures that the case manager receives the completed Attending Physician Statement that supports their need for sick leave within 10 working days from the 1<sup>st</sup> day of absence, the Employer will approve sick leave in accordance with Collective Agreement provisions or the Employer Human Resources policy.

**3. If on the 1<sup>st</sup> working day of absence the employee believes they will be off for more than 5 consecutive working days, can the Attending Physician Statement be completed and submitted immediately?**

The earlier an employee seeks medical attention and has the completed Attending Physician Statement submitted to the case manager, the sooner the request for sick leave beyond 5 consecutive working days can be approved.

**4. What should an employee do if they may be off for more than 5 consecutive working days but is having trouble getting a medical appointment by the 6<sup>th</sup> working day of absence or if they are concerned that their physician may not return the Attending Physician Statement within 10 working days from the 1<sup>st</sup> day of absence ?**

The employee must advise their supervisor or the case manager as soon as possible. The case manager will then be able to assist the employee to meet the requirements in a timely manner.

**5. Does an employee need a case manager if they will be off for more than 5 consecutive working days but is not expecting to be on sick leave for a long time or if their recovery and return to work are expected to be straightforward?**

The case manager provides all employees with support in their recovery and return to work, regardless of the duration of sick leave.

**6. What can an employee do if his/her sick leave is not approved by the time the pay is being processed?**

While awaiting the approval of sick leave requests, an employee can use any paid vacation leave to which he/she is entitled. In that case, when the sick leave is approved, those dates will be converted from vacation to sick leave

**7. After the Employer has approved sick leave for the first 5 consecutive working days, how will additional sick leave be approved?**

After the first 5 consecutive working days, sick leave will be approved by the Employer based on the assessment of the case manager that the sick leave request is medically supported.

**8. How long does it take for case manager to determine if the request for sick leave is supported?**

Normally, the case manager will make the assessment within 3 working days of receiving the completed employee and Attending Physician Statements to support the request for sick leave.

**9. If the case manager determines that the request for sick leave is not supported and the employee disagrees, what can they do?**

The employee can appeal the decision by submitting additional medical information to the case manager to support the request for sick leave.

**10. If an employee is unionized, can their bargaining agent assist with the employee's return to work?**

At the request of the employee, the case manager and the Employer will work with the employee and his/her bargaining agent when establishing the return to work plan, including any accommodation requirements.

**11. What if an employee is able to work but has a medical condition that requires accommodation or if an employee believes they can return to work on a modified work arrangement?**

Refer to the Employment Accommodation and Return to Work Policies and/or speak with the local Human Resources Office.

**12. What happens if an employee is likely to be absent for more than 17 weeks or if an employee is not entitled to Long Term Disability?**

Eligible employees may be entitled to Long Term Disability benefits if they remain unable to work beyond 17 weeks. In that case, a Long Term Disability application will not be required, as the case manager will collect the relevant information during the period of sick leave to ensure a smooth transition to Long Term Disability.

If an employee is not entitled to Long Term Disability, the case manager can still assist the employee with their recovery and return to work.

**13. If an employee's collective agreement requires a medical certificate for absences in excess of 3 working days, are they required to submit a medical certificate if their absence does not exceed 5 consecutive working days?**

In these cases the employee will only need to submit a medical certificate if they are notified by the Employer of the requirement beforehand.