

Returning to work

TAC information for
current employers

About the TAC

The TAC is a Victorian Government-owned organisation whose role is to pay for treatment and support services for people injured in transport accidents. It is also involved in promoting road safety in Victoria and improving the state's trauma system.

A key role of the TAC is to work with injured people, their employers and doctors to help them get back to work.



1300 654 329



www.tac.vic.gov.au

Working together

There are many people involved in supporting a person to recover and return to work after injury. Working together, we can support a person to return to productive employment following a transport accident.

Your role

You have an important part to play in your employee's successful return to work. A timely return to work can help your employee's overall recovery and rehabilitation after an accident.

The benefits of playing an active role in your employees return to work include:

- Your employee will recover faster after injury; resuming employment is one of the most effective forms of rehabilitation
- You retain knowledge and skills, reducing the cost of hiring and training new staff
- You reduce the cost of lost productivity
- You help build and maintain morale in the workplace

To assist your employees return to work you can:

- Contact your employee to see how they are recovering and stay in regular contact. A connection with the workplace can help your employee stay positive about recovering and returning to work.
- Consider the role and tasks your employee does. If your employee can't perform their normal duties straight away there may be other tasks they might be able to do within the workplace. Your employee doesn't need to be 100 percent recovered to return to work. We can support you with ensuring a safe return to work for your employee.
- Provide detail about your employee's role. You may be asked us to complete a job checklist. The information about the role will assist your employee's treating health care professional and TAC coordinator to evaluate your employee's capacity for work.
- Discuss with us the support you may require to ensure a successful return to work for your employee.

We will discuss with you the benefits and supports available to you and your employee to make their return to work as smooth as possible.



The role of your employee

We have encouraged your employee to stay in regular contact with you and update you on the progress of their recovery.

They should:

- contact you to discuss their recovery and return to work
- discuss options of returning to work including things like potential for alternate duties and/or reduced hours
- supply you with certificates of capacity which detail their capacity to work

The TAC's role in helping injured clients return to work

Our first step will be to contact you and your employee to discuss the return to work process.

We will:

- talk to your employee about how they are recovering
- discuss whether they have considered returning to work
- link your employee into appropriate supports and services if required
- contact you to discuss your employee's return to work
- talk to you about the work your employee does
- ask if alternate or modified duties are available
- discuss any questions or concerns you may have about your employee's return to work
 - discuss the support you might need to enable a successful return to work for your employee

The role of the health care professional

Your employee's health care professional is an important person in the return to work process.

They should:

- Assess your employee's capacity for work and provide recommendations to your employee about what they can do in relation to work and provide advice about any restrictions or equipment needs to facilitate their return to work.

- Advise how your employee should best manage their return to work, such as whether to take regular breaks or do an exercise program.
- Complete a certificate of capacity that will indicate whether your employee is ready to return to work. Your employee may be able to return to their normal duties or it may be recommended they initially perform suitable or modified duties or a reduced number of hours depending on how they are recovering from their injuries.

Return to work specialist

The majority of our clients return to work with the support of their doctor, the TAC and their employer. Sometimes the services of an independent return to work specialist are needed to facilitate a return to work program for clients with particular needs.

We engage external Vocational rehabilitation providers who employ qualified return to work specialists. They will work with you, your employee and the TAC to plan a return to work program that meets your needs and the needs of your employee.

The return to work specialist may:

- conduct a worksite assessment to determine a working environment appropriate for your employee
- assess and recommend any modifications to your employee's duties or hours
- liaise with your employee's health care professional to ensure hours and duties are appropriate
- assess and recommend any physical changes to the workplace or equipment
- work with your occupational health and safety manager (if applicable)
- facilitate the development of a return to work program and monitor your employee's progress to ensure they adjust to work again
- be the key contact in relation to the return to work program

TAC support

A range of supports and services are available to help you to facilitate a successful return to work for your employee.

Employer incentive package

We may be able to offer you the following supports:

- work trial phase
- wage subsidies
- WorkCover insurance premium protection
- a one off payment to assist with administrative costs
- workplace modifications and/or equipment

The package is designed to ensure your employee can return to work as safely and productively as possible as well as minimising any potential financial impact on you and your business.

To access the TAC Employer Incentive Package, your employee must have an accepted TAC claim and, in most cases, a TAC referral to an authorised return to work specialist.

The trial phase

The return to work specialist may recommend a trial phase as part of the return to work program to support your employee's transition back to work.

The trial phase is normally up to 4 weeks in duration and is designed to:

- assist your employee to return to their pre-accident working hours and duties or
- trial a new role within the workplace allowing them to learn the role and gradually increase their productivity
- allow the return to work specialist to fine tune their recommendations, if necessary, before a graded return to work commences

During the trial phase the TAC will reimburse you 100% for the hours your employee works. The number of hours they work depends on a number of factors, including: their capacity, the worksite assessment conducted by the return to work specialist and your business needs.

The return to work specialist can use the results of the trial phase to plan the remainder of the return to work program with you and your employee.

Graded wage subsidy

The graded wage subsidy is designed to support you while your employee resumes normal duties or becomes confident in a new role and reaches full productivity.

Productivity is identified by a return to work specialist in collaboration with you and your employee as part of a return to work plan.

The graded wage subsidy forms part of an ongoing return to work plan. If it is required, the productivity of the employee is established and the wage subsidy paid to the employer is based on the productivity while at work.

For example, if the employee is 70% productive in his/her required duties, the TAC will reimburse the employer 30% of the wage for the hours worked. The wage subsidy decreases as the employees' productivity increases.

WorkCover insurance premium protection

The WorkCover insurance incentive protects your WorkCover premium if your employee is injured or re-injured during a TAC return to work program. This means that, as an employer, your WorkCover premium is not affected in the unlikely event of a workplace injury during a return to work program.



In addition, we will reimburse the WorkCover excess incurred as a result of any WorkCover claim.

Safety is essential in the workplace. This is why a return to work specialist and other health practitioners where required can support you by making recommendations for safe and suitable duties that your employee can do in the workplace.

During the return to work program you will be responsible for the usual components of the employment relationship. These include supervision, performance management, superannuation, industrial relations, human resources, standard equipment required for the role and all other WorkCover obligations.

This incentive can be provided alone or together with the trial phase or graded wage subsidy.

Some exclusions apply to accessing the WorkCover insurance premium protection. These include:

- interstate employers (that is, outside Victoria)
- employers who self-insure for WorkCover
- employers covered by ComCare
- where a WorkCover claim has not been accepted by the TAC's WorkCover agent

You can contact us on 1300 654 329 to see if your business is eligible for WorkCover insurance.



What to expect in the return to work process

The following steps are a guide to what you can expect BEFORE a TAC client begins work:

The return to work specialist will conduct a work-site assessment. During this assessment, your employees' productivity will be assessed. If a wage subsidy is needed, the initial wage subsidy will be agreed upon at this stage.

The return to work specialist will then provide a report cleared by a medical practitioner to all parties, confirming duties, work hours, wage subsidies and any other recommendations (eg equipment needs).

The TAC will confirm in writing the details of the return to work plan, WorkCover insurance and subsidy payments.

The following steps are a guide to what you can expect AFTER the TAC client begins work:

The client will start work as per the return to work plan.

During the return to work plan you should pay your employee only for the hours they work.

In the case of wage subsidies, either you or your new employee should send or email payslips to the TAC. This will ensure you are reimbursed the agreed wage subsidy (for hours worked) and help us calculate any partial income benefit to be paid to the client.

The return to work specialist will conduct regular reviews throughout the return to work plan and will provide regular progress reports to all parties detailing any changes in productivity, duties and hours to be worked.

There is no set time frame for a return to work program, however it will normally run for a minimum of 12 weeks and the return to work specialist will finalise the program once the return to work goals are achieved and sustained.

Remember to:

- 1 Stay in touch with your employee and talk to them about their return to work.
- 2 Have a think about what your employee can do even if it is not their usual duties.
- 3 Contact the TAC if you have questions about your employee returning to work.
- 4 Contact the TAC if you would like more information on the Employer Incentive Package.
- 5 Be proactive, don't wait for your employee to contact you about returning to work.
- 6 If there is a setback – contact the TAC for help.



Frequently asked questions

How do I know if my employee is ready to return to work?

Your employee's health practitioner should advise them when it is suitable to return via a certificate of capacity which will advise in which capacity they can return to work. If you have any concerns about your employee returning to work you should discuss this with your employee and their doctor and/or return to work specialist.

Contact us to see what options are available to ensure that your employee has a safe and productive return to work.

Can I expect my employee to be fully fit?

Your employee's health practitioner may recommend your employee return to work doing suitable duties. This means they may not yet be fully fit to complete all aspects of the role, however returning to work doing suitable duties will allow them to recover sooner and build productivity. Depending on the length of time off work and the nature of the injury, your employee may require a graded return to work.

If your employee has any restrictions, you will be made aware of these and you can be supported to make adjustments and/or modifications to their role and/or work environment.

Is there any legal obligation for me to take an injured worker back?

Unlike WorkCover legislation, there are no provisions in the *Transport Accident Act 1986* which require an employer to keep a job open for a worker injured in a transport accident.

However, having a valued employee returning to your workplace will be important for your organisation as well as to help your employee recover from their injuries. We will work with you and your employee during the return to work process. We can offer incentives to support you and help ease the financial impact of taking back an employee after an accident.

What happens if I take someone back and they get re-injured?

As part of the Employer Incentive Package we may be able to offer a return to work program that includes WorkCover Premium Protection.

I'm worried that if I take someone back who isn't fully fit, my business may suffer due to lost productivity.

As part of the Employer Incentive Package we can consider paying a wage subsidy to compensate your business while you support your employee in their return to work. These subsidies will be developed with the help of a return to work specialist and will be agreed upon by all parties before any return to work program commences so that you know exactly what to expect.

What if modifications are needed to the workplace. Who will pay for this?

We can consider paying the cost of reasonable workplace equipment and/or modifications that will assist with an employee's return to work. The return to work specialist will assess the worksite and recommend to us the types of modifications or equipment required.

They will discuss the recommendations with your employee's treating doctor and advise us on the modifications required. If appropriate, we will then pay for these modifications to help your injured worker return safely.

Who will pay for sick leave if my employee has to have time off for treatment of their accident injuries?

Medical appointments should be outside of work time. However if your employee has to have time off work due to their accident injuries, they need to advise us of this via a certificate of capacity, or a medical report from their treating practitioner.

If approved, we can organise a reimbursement to you for the sick leave taken or pay the TAC client directly for the time they require off work.

How long will the return to work specialist be involved?

The return to work specialist will monitor your employee for a minimum of 12 weeks once their return to work goal has been achieved. In some instances, an employee may need support for a longer period.

If further vocational assistance is required contact the TAC coordinator to see what options are available.

Contact us

8.30am to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday



1300 654 329 (local call)

1800 332 556 (toll-free outside the Melbourne metropolitan area)



Address

60 Brougham Street, Geelong VIC 3220



Mailing address

TAC, GPO Box 2751, Melbourne VIC 3001



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For information about the TAC in your own language, call one of the numbers listed here:

العربية

1300 138 639

Ελληνικά

1300 138 642

廣東話

1300 138 640

Türkçe

1300 139 073

Polski

1300 139 072

Hrvatski

1300 138 641

Tiếng Việt

1300 139 074

English

1300 139 076

Italiano

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All other languages

1300 139 075

普通话

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