



Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia
Duty To Cooperate: Getting Creative
May 29, 2025

Facilitated by:

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Example 1 (non-work-related injury):

Basic details

- Carol, 40 year-old female
- Health Care Attendant (Home Health Aide or Nursing Assistant) – Medium activity level
- Lower Back Strain (injury to the muscles or tendons in the lower back due to improper lifting, overuse, or sudden movements)
- Mechanism of Injury: Strained back while lifting heavy bags of mulch when gardening over the weekend



MDGuidelines

- Treatment guidelines: 6 visits over 8 weeks
- Disability Duration Guideline (DDG):

Sedentary	1-3 days
Light	7 days
Medium	21 days
Heavy	35 days
Very Heavy	42 days

Job Duties for Health Care Attendant (Home Health Aide or Nursing Assistant)

- Personal care assistance: Helping patients with activities of daily living (ADLs) such as bathing, dressing, grooming, and toileting. This may involve lifting or supporting patients who have limited mobility.
- Feeding assistance: Preparing meals based on dietary needs and assisting with feeding patients who are unable to feed themselves.
- Transferring and mobility: Helping patients move between beds, chairs, or wheelchairs, often requiring the attendant to physically lift or support the patient.
- Medication reminders: Ensuring that patients take their prescribed medications on time, though without administering the medication directly.

- Vital sign monitoring: Checking patients' vital signs, such as blood pressure, heart rate, temperature, and respiratory rate, and reporting any abnormalities to supervising nurses or physicians.
- Housekeeping and errands: Performing light housekeeping duties such as cleaning, laundry, and organizing patients' living spaces, as well as running errands like grocery shopping.



Example 2 (work-related injury):

Basic details

- 40 year-old female
- Health Care Attendant (Home Health Aide or Nursing Assistant) – Medium activity level
- Lower Back Strain (injury to the muscles or tendons in the lower back due to improper lifting, overuse, or sudden movements)
- Mechanism of Injury: Slip while transferring patient from chair to wheelchair

MDGuidelines

- Treatment guidelines: 6 visits over 8 weeks
- Disability Duration Guideline (DDG):

Sedentary	1-3 days
Light	7 days
Medium	21 days
Heavy	35 days
Very Heavy	42 days

Job Duties for Health Care Attendant (Home Health Aide or Nursing Assistant)

- Personal care assistance: Helping patients with activities of daily living (ADLs) such as bathing, dressing, grooming, and toileting. This may involve lifting or supporting patients who have limited mobility.
- Feeding assistance: Preparing meals based on dietary needs and assisting with feeding patients who are unable to feed themselves.

- Transferring and mobility: Helping patients move between beds, chairs, or wheelchairs, often requiring the attendant to physically lift or support the patient.
- Medication reminders: Ensuring that patients take their prescribed medications on time, though without administering the medication directly.
- Vital sign monitoring: Checking patients' vital signs, such as blood pressure, heart rate, temperature, and respiratory rate, and reporting any abnormalities to supervising nurses or physicians.
- Housekeeping and errands: Performing light housekeeping duties such as cleaning, laundry, and organizing patients' living spaces, as well as running errands like grocery shopping.

A reasonable TSRTW Plan is one that:

1. Start Date – as soon as safely possible
2. End Date - has an end date (or goal date) within the expected DDG for the highest “activity level” of pre-injury work (i.e. sedentary, light, medium, heavy or very heavy).
3. Connection to Pre-injury Duties - includes all or some pre-injury work or a path to pre-injury work with pre-injury work connectedness.
4. Functional Abilities - respects the worker’s restrictions and limitations on functional abilities.
5. Progression of Duties – if needed, progresses to pre-injury duties in accordance with expected functional improvement.
6. Pre-injury Hours - if needed, progresses to pre-injury hours.
7. Regular Monitoring – includes monitoring and check-in processes at the workplace and with the WCB Case Manager and, where appropriate, the WCB RTW Specialist or external Occupational Therapist

Activity Level Classifications

SEDENTARY Work

- Exerting up to 4.5 kg (10 lbs) of force occasionally and/or a negligible amount of force frequently.
Example: An occupation where the worker sits most of the time, and only walks or stands for brief periods.

LIGHT Work

- Exerting up to 9.1 kg (20 lbs) of force occasionally and/or up to 4.5 kg (10 lbs) frequently and/or negligible amounts constantly. Example: Walking or standing to a significant degree or sitting constantly but with arm and/or leg controls with exertion of force greater than sedentary.

MEDIUM Work

- Exerting up to 22.7 kg (50 lbs) of force occasionally and/or up to 9.1 kg (20 lbs) of force frequently and/or up to 4.5 kg (10 lbs) forces constantly.

HEAVY Work

- Exerting up to 45.4 kg (100 lbs) of force occasionally and/or up to 22.7 kg (50 lbs) of force frequently and/or in excess of 9.1 kg (20 lbs) of force constantly.

VERY HEAVY Work

- Exerting in excess of 45.4 kg (100 lbs) of force occasionally and/or in excess of 22.7 kg (50 lbs) of force frequently and/or in excess of 9.1 kg (20 lbs) of force constantly.

Timely and Safe Return-to-Work (TSRTW) Plan For

Carol

Plan date: May 29, 2025

Employer: Super Home Care Inc	Pre-injury job position (including maximum activity level): Home Care Attendant (medium)
Pre-injury hours/schedule: Monday – Friday, 8-4	
Date of Injury: May 28, 2025	Injury Hazard mitigation: Yes
Timely and safe return-to-work (TSRTW) start date: May 30, 2025	
Return-to-work goal date and milestones: Return to full duties and hours June 18, 2025	
Part of Body Injured: Lower back	

Contact List:

Here you will find the people involved in supporting your safe and timely return to work after injury.

TSRTW Role	Name	Work Phone
Worker	Carol	(902)-111-1111
Pre-injury Supervisor	Joan Boss	(902)-222-2222
TSRTW Supervisor (if different than pre-injury supervisor)	Could be Joan Boss or Jamal Supervisor depending on the assignment	(902) 333-3333
Tier 1 Service Provider	Sam Physio	(902) 444-4444
WCB Case Worker Contact the WCB Case Worker with concerns about the TSRTW Plan at any time, regardless of the monitoring schedule.	Hema Adjudicator	(902) 555-5555
Other (Specify)		

Functional Abilities Information:

(i.e. limitations and restrictions that require accommodation)

Lifting restriction:

Can only do sedentary functions until June 5th (no frequent lifting over 10lbs)

Can start light duties June 5 (light is up to 20lbs occasionally and 10 lbs frequently)

Needs a minimum 10-minute break each hour



TSRTW Calendar

Days and hours scheduled each week								
From - To	M	T	W	Th	F	S	S	TSRTW Plan
May 30-June 4	8	8	8	8	8			<input type="checkbox"/> Modified Pre-injury work
<p>Specifications:</p> <p>Can perform the following duties for high need clients assigned 2 home care workers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feeding assistance: Preparing meals based on dietary needs and assisting with feeding patients who are unable to feed themselves. Medication reminders: Ensuring that patients take their prescribed medications on time, though without administering the medication directly. Vital sign monitoring: Checking patients' vital signs, such as blood pressure, heart rate, temperature, and respiratory rate, and reporting any abnormalities to supervising nurses or physicians. <p>Will take a 10-minute rest break every hour.</p>								
June 5 - 11	8	8	8	8	8			<input type="checkbox"/> Modified Pre-injury work
<p>Specifications</p> <p>Duties listed above, AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housekeeping and errands: Performing light housekeeping duties such as cleaning, laundry, and organizing patient's living spaces, as well as running errands like grocery shopping. (as long as no items, bags or bins are over 20 lbs) 10-minute break/hour 								
June 12 - 17	8	8		8	8			<input type="checkbox"/> Modified Pre-injury work
<p>Specifications</p> <p>Duties listed above, occasional lifting up to 35 lbs</p>								
June 18			8					<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-injury work
<p>Specifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Return to pre-injury duties 								

Monitoring/Review

(outline schedule for regular monitoring and review):

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Frequent and informal check-ins with supervisor at Workplace	With Joan or Jamal will check in with Carol via phone call at the end of shifts on May 30 - June 4 Daily text check-ins by Joan or Jamal at end of shift June 5 – 11 Call by Joan or Jamal at the end of shift on June 12, June 17 and June 18.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Periodic follow up meetings for worker and supervisor with WCB Case Worker (to review progress, functional information received, and update plan as needed)	Hema Adjudicator will group call Carol and Joan on Fridays at 1pm to check in on plan progression
<input type="checkbox"/>	Case Conference	n/a at present
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify)	Expecting an updated functional progress report from Sam Physio on or around June 12 th . Plan will be adjusted, if needed, at that time.

Additional Notes:

- If there are no high need clients requiring two workers, Carol will be assigned to clients with no mobility issues and minimum physical needs. If those are not available, Carol will be assigned as an “extra” worker during her TSRTW plan.

Glossary / Information

Term	Definition / Example
Timely and Safe Return to Work (TSRTW)	A collaborative process that considers a worker's restrictions and limitations at the earliest appropriate opportunity immediately following an injury to enable safe recovery at work.
Pre-injury job	The duties and conditions of employment of a worker at the time of their injury.
Job or job tasks	Job tasks are the specific actions that are required to fulfill one's "duties". For example, a worker's duty might be to wash the floor nightly – there might be 2 or more "job tasks" that make up this essential duty such as moving furniture, sweeping the floor, and retrieving the mop from the cupboard.
Restrictions	Clear and specific things to avoid during recovery because there is a specific risk of harm or a safety concern, including but not limited to specific tasks, exposures, body motions, and/or positional tolerances. (e.g. "do not drive")
Limitations	A limitation defines the extent to which a worker may perform an activity safely but does not prevent an injured worker from performing that activity. (e.g. lift up to 10 pounds).
Transitional Work	Any temporary work changes needed to take into consideration a worker's restrictions and limitations to transition back to the pre-injury job during recovery. Includes modified pre-injury work and alternate work (e.g. changing duties, location, shift changes).
Modified pre-injury work	Enabling safe work by taking the worker's temporary restrictions and limitations into consideration through changes to the non-essential duties of the pre-injury job, conditions of employment (e.g. work schedule) or addition of assistive devices to the pre-injury job. Planning starts with the full list of pre-injury job tasks and identifies those which can't be done (or can only be done with accommodation) based on restrictions and limitations.
Alternate work	Enabling safe work by taking the worker's temporary restrictions and limitations into consideration through changing the essential duties of pre-injury work with the goal of returning to pre-injury work.
SPICE Principles	The over-arching set of principles that guides WCB's approach to Return to Work Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple – First, deal with things quickly while they are simple before they become more complicated. Second, use language that focuses on ability,

is free of 'jargon' and that makes sense to the worker, service provider, and employer.

- Proximity – Ensure the worker continues feeling connected to the workplace and employer. Good communication builds trust and transparency during the claim.
- Immediacy – Quick action is essential! For the best results possible, connect with workers, employers and service providers as soon as possible after an injury occurs. Early and frequent communication keeps everyone connected, helps ensure the worker's needs are understood, concerns are addressed, and the injury is treated as quickly as possible.
- Centrality – Keep the worker at the center of all processes and policies with a focus on removing as many barriers to recovery as possible.
- Expectancy – Working to well starts with working together. Expecting all of us – workers, service providers, the WCB, and employers – to commit, wherever possible, to returning the worker to work is the most important piece of the return-to-work model. This expectation, along with consistent messaging and a focus on ability management, will lead to good results.

