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## After a Workplace Injury, Engaging Recovering Workers Out on Lost-Time

To help mitigate long absences from becoming even costlier, make it a priority to maintain meaningful engagement with your recovering employee while they are out on lost-time. This helps them feel they are still part of the team and that you care.

### **How do you maintain contact with your workers when they are out?**

At a minimum, we recommend doing at least a bi-weekly check-in for **the entire duration of the claim** until its resolution or until the worker returns to work. This check-in can be done preferably by a supervisor, or if that is not possible, a Human Resources designee, another manager, or someone else from the company who can speak on its behalf.

This is a check-in aside from what your insurance adjuster is doing. Employees should regularly hear from the time-of-injury employer. Yes, adjusters are a reflection of you, but you cannot solely rely on a busy adjuster to be the employee's sole contact.

### **DOCUMENTATION TIPS:**

It's a helpful reference to have a running contact log to document what you talk to the employee about. Following are some suggestions.

- Use an MS Excel spreadsheet, a table on MS Word, or even a handwritten ongoing log
- Document the date/time of the call/check-in and any issues that may have come up or something to follow-up on to help that worker
- If you say you will follow-up on something, do so and document that as well
- Advise your claims administrator you regularly contact all workers on lost-time
- Do a standing bi-weekly Outlook reminder or mark it on your calendar so you don't forget

### **Below are some ideas for weekly check-ins:**

1. Send/email the company newsletter or anything about goings-on within the company, news about awards
2. Send a get well card signed by the recovering worker's manager/co-workers
3. Send a birthday card or another card for any special events in that individual's life
4. Invite recovering worker to attend any upcoming company picnics, birthday celebrations, or other team building events
5. Text message - phone calls are preferable to a text message, but you can do a text message in conjunction with a phone call
6. Brief check-in phone call - this is especially effective, as hearing concern in someone's voice can go a long way – When you call, below are some tips:

### **Bad questions never to ask – these can result in your worker feeling resentment/distrust:**

- Extensive questions/"advice" about their health diagnoses or specific medical treatments
- Avoid placing any blame about the injury and don't refer to "faking" or exaggerating the injury
- Avoid negativity
- Avoid asking things such as "Aren't you better yet?"

**Good questions – let your workers know they are valued and missed:**

- “I want to stay in contact with you – are you comfortable with me giving you a quick check-in call once every other week?”  
- If they say no, ask - “What might work better for you?”
- “Hi, how are you doing?”
- “How are you feeling?”
- “Have you talked to your adjuster lately?” (You want to know how your claims adjuster is doing – they are an extension of you and represent your company to this worker)
- “Are you following your doctor’s restrictions even at home? – make sure you do”
- “Are you keeping up with all your appointments and therapy? – make sure you do”
- “Let’s talk about your options in getting back to work – let’s work on it together”
- “Do you have any questions or concerns that we can help you with on our end?”
- “We miss you around here and are still thinking of you”
- “We will stay in touch and call me if you need anything”

Remember - the point is to help your recovering worker maintain a positive frame of mind about returning to work.

You are attempting to overcome obstacles and to provide reassurance. It’s part of doing right by your worker, which helps result in a quicker and more successful claim resolution – a benefit to both of you.