

Navigating Barriers to Return to Work

Presented by Kirstin Sieben,
Return to Work Team Leader, TeksMed Services Inc.
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Who is TeksMed?



30 Years in Business



Proudly Canadian



Industry Leader

Kirstin Sieben, Return to Work Team Manager

- Graduated university with distinction and has since spent 10 years in the human services industry.
- Previously a case manager and adjudicator at the Worker's Compensation Board of Alberta.
- With TeksMed, has grown from a Return to Work Coordinator to the leader of the entire return-to-work team by proving herself to be both technically adept and passionately dedicated.



Agenda

01 Why Return to Work is Important

02 What an Effective Return to Work Plan Looks Like

03 Common Return to Work Challenges & Solutions

04 Deeper Examination of Mental Health Claims

05 Questions & Answers

Why is Return to Work Important?

There are numerous consequences to prolonged employee absence:



Increased
Premiums



Increased
Administration



Decreased
Productivity



Employee
Disengagement

Why is Return to Work Important?

Effective return to work strategies benefit both employees and their employers.

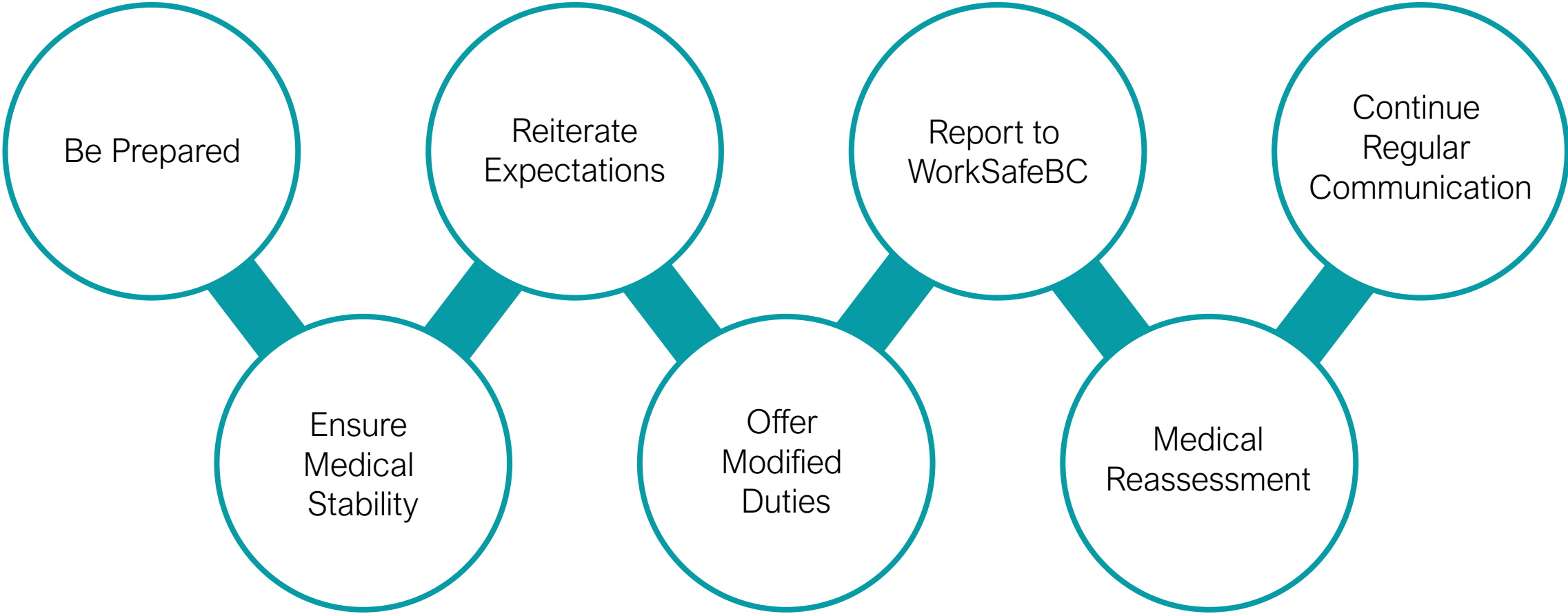
Employer Benefits

- 01** Mitigate claim costs
- 02** Protect productivity
- 03** Fulfill legal obligations

Employee Benefits

- 01** Full wages
- 02** Support and stability
- 03** Quicker recovery

What to Do in the Event of an Injury or Illness





What an Effective Return to Work Plan Looks Like

- 01** Immediate offer of modified duties based on common sense restrictions.
- 02** Gradual hours or modified shift schedule if needed.
- 03** Regular medical updates; typically every two weeks. Updating modified duties according to restrictions.
- 04** Consistent communication with the worker.
- 05** Continuing efforts even when worker is back to modified duties, to mitigate risk of regression.

Common Challenges to Return to Work

If it were as simple as following a checklist or step-by-step instructions, disability management experts like TeksMed would not exist!

Unfortunately, there are often complications or challenges to getting an employee back to work.



**Physical
Challenges**



**Logistical
Challenges**



**Mental Health
Challenges**

Physical Challenges

Difficulties Identifying Modified Duties

Doctor's Notes

Worsening Condition

Medication Side-effects or Restrictions



Physical Solutions

Difficulties Identifying Modified Duties

- Speak with the worker
- Consider a site visit by an occupational therapist
- Get creative

Doctor's Notes

- Prepare for medical reassessment
- Maintain communication

Worsening Condition

- Speak with the worker
- Arrange for medical reassessment
- Review modified duties

Medication Side-effects or Restrictions

- Adjust modified duties





Logistical Challenges

No Communication from Worker

Lack of Transportation

No Family Doctor/Long Wait for Medical

Appointments During Work Hours



Logistical Solutions

No Communication from Worker

- Confirm contact information
- Attempt different methods
- Seek assistance from WorkSafeBC

Lack of Transportation

- Privately ask nearby coworkers
- Arrange for taxi/Uber

No Family Doctor/Long Wait for Medical

- Assist with finding nearby clinics
- Explore virtual health options

Appointments During Work Hours

- Speak to the worker
- Offer options that work outside of work hours

Mental Challenges

Stigma/Fear of Judgement

Bullying/Harassment by Other Workers

Sensitive Nature of Claims



Mental Solutions

Stigma/Fear of Judgement

- Proactive education
- Demonstrate understanding

Bullying/Harassment by Other Workers

- Speak to worker
- Separate implicated parties
- Correct inappropriate behaviour

Sensitive Nature of Claims

- Regular communication
- Remind worker of their treatment options



The Nuance of Mental Health Claims

We need to view mental illnesses as:

- Commonplace, human conditions
- Actual neurological disorders
- Treatable medical conditions

Mental health issues in the workplace should be handled the same as a physical health concern:

- Understand it's not the employee's fault
- Evaluate what the condition means in regards to the employee's ability to perform their job duties
- If necessary, offer accommodations or alternate duties that respect the employee's limitations



The Nuance of Mental Health Claims

Things to Do

- Focus on objective limitations and restrictions in regards to their work
- Remove them from identified mental health triggers
- Inform them of possible accommodations or alternate duties
- Meet with them regularly to understand progress of ongoing barriers
- Remind them of benefits available to them

Things to Avoid

- Ignore the claim altogether for fear of upsetting them
- Ask or probe for a diagnosis
- Dismiss their thoughts or feelings
- Accuse them of making things up or exaggerating things
- Attempt to relate with personal anecdotes
- Try to fix them or resolve all their problems

The Nuance of Mental Health Claims

Types of accommodations:

- Distance from triggers
- Modified job duties
- Different approach to supervision
- Tailored training
- Schedule flexibility
- Alternate workspace or location



In Summary



Communicate



Substantiate



Accommodate



Update

A large teal circular graphic with a gradient from light to dark teal, framing the central text.

See you at the Safety Alliance Soirée!

**October 4th 2023
5:00pm to 7:00pm**

**@ TeksMed Services Inc.
44600 Skylark Road
Chilliwack, BC V2R 6H5**

www.teksmed.com/safety-alliance-soiree

THANK YOU

We would be happy to answer any further questions.



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