The Modified Duty Program: 
A Guide to Supervisory & Management Responsibilities

The behaviors and actions displayed by supervisory and management personnel in response to a workplace injury can have a significant impact on both the cost and duration of a claim. While it is commonly thought that it is the sole responsibility of the insurance company to communicate with the injured worker, studies have shown that regular contact by supervisory and management personnel achieves better results. When these staff members respond promptly, communicate effectively and show empathy towards the injured employee, the individual can be much more receptive to the idea of returning to work and of modified job duties.

Pre-incident
- Discuss company’s aggressive stance on modified duty during the interview and new employee orientation process.
- Promote early reporting and follow-up with any employee injury complaints.
- Recommend medical attention and treatment if needed.
- Develop a list of pre-determined jobs able to accommodate a wide variety of medical restrictions. It may be helpful to solicit job task ideas from coworkers to match various medical restrictions or give this task to a functioning safety committee as a project.
- Take time to answer employee questions related to the company’s modified duty program.
- Emphasize the high degree of importance that safety has within the company operations.
- Contact and visit the principal medical providers that treat your employees’ work-related injuries.
- Establish your commitment to the program by inviting the medical providers to tour your company to view the layout, the tasks that are required and the modified duty jobs that are currently available or could be used.
- Provide the medical community with an overview of your program and a listing of predetermined jobs. Ask that the information be kept available for reference and that all appropriate medical staff be aware of the information.
- If you have or can develop a relationship with a medical provider, encourage injured employees to seek medical treatment from that provider. Explain to employees that the provider understands the company’s policies, what is available in modified duty and that the provider will work with all parties concerned to get the employee back to full earning capacity as soon as possible.

Injury Response
- Take time to handle the injury properly.
- Authorize medical attention immediately if needed. Provide necessary authorization forms and arrange for transportation if needed.
- Express concern, be supportive and have a positive attitude, even though there is an injury to process and review.
- Avoid blaming the employee and provide them with encouraging support by emphasizing their importance to the company. Employees who feel condemned for their workplace injury may resist the idea of returning to work early.
- Investigate the circumstances of the reported injury and record all pertinent data. Try to identify root cause of incident.
- Report the injury and supply documentation to the human resource department or other designated area.
- Determine preventive measures or actions and make corrections immediately. Refer major changes to upper management.

Our safety evaluations, reports and recommendations are made solely to assist your organization in reducing hazards and the potential of hazards and accidents. These recommendations were developed from conditions observed and information provided at the time of our visit. They do not attempt to identify every possible loss potential, hazard or risk, nor do they guarantee that workplace accidents will be prevented. These safety evaluations, reports and recommendations are not a substitute for ongoing, well-researched internal safety and risk management programs. This report does not warrant that the property inspected and its operations are compliant with any law, rule or regulation.
Injury Management

- Keep informed about the employee’s recovery, current treatment and how the employee perceives the quality of the medical treatment by contacting the individual every three days until they return to work. The quality of treatment is directly related to how fast the employee recovers and avoids re-injury in the future.
- Maintain regular contact with your United Heartland Claims Representative.
- Explain all modified jobs in detail to the employee and point out any safety precautions that may exist.
- Know the employee’s medical restrictions and monitor them daily. Consider keeping a daily log to ensure that you and the employee do not exceed the restrictions unintentionally. (LC-0542)
- Be aware of any employee on modified duty whether he/she is working in your department or not. It is important not to assign any tasks or allow any tasks to be performed that exceed medical restrictions. Supervisors must share this information.

The Modified Duty Program:
A Guide to Supervisory & Management Training

Providing supervisory and management personnel training on how to best respond to employees’ work-related health and safety concerns should be an essential part of any modified duty program. Effective training of these individuals allows an organization to communicate a commitment to modified duty throughout all levels of employment. Further, when supervisors and management personnel are trained on how to respond to employees’ health concerns, prompt injury management techniques can be implemented to both reduce claim costs and administer corrective actions.

The following outline the goals of providing modified duty training to supervisory and management personnel:
- Instill an understanding of the importance early reporting.
- Develop strong relationships with the medical community.
- Enhance the identification of root causes through proactive injury analysis. It also raises awareness of ergonomics risk factors in the workplace.
- Foster improved employee relationships that avoid blame.
- Strengthen the relationship with the United Heartland Claims contact.
- Strengthen supervisor’s active listening skills as it pertains to obtaining proper information.

Here at United Heartland, we expand on modified duty practices and other ways to control your insurance costs by providing our Workers’ Compensation 101 training presentation. Through this service, upper management and supervisors can expect to learn the following:
- A brief overview of workers’ compensation insurance including: common terminology, what’s compensable, etc.
- Factors that determine your premium
- Information regarding your MOD and how to best control it
- Modified duty best practices including: developing a formal written program, creating a job bank, how to educate your employees, etc.
- Accident investigation best practices including: determining the root cause, interviewing techniques/5 Why’s, etc.
- Financial costs associated with an injury to include the impact of an effective Modified Duty Program
- How to most effectively report/record an incident
- How to select and develop an relationship with your medical provider
- The importance of maintaining constant contact with your United Heartland Claims Representative