

Member Return-to-Work (RTW) Quick Guide

Your goals: Start steady, stay safe, and speak up early if something isn't working. You do **not** need to share personal health details—keep conversations **work-focused**.

1. Before Day 1

- Confirm your **start date, time, and work location**.
- Know who your **main contact** is (supervisor/principal).
- Review your **RTW plan**:
 - Hours and schedule
 - Duties and tasks
 - Any accommodations or equipment
- Plan practical basics:
 - Transportation
 - Comfortable clothing/footwear
 - Snacks/water
 - Medication timing (if needed)

2. Day 1: Start Steady

- Arrive a few minutes early and check in with your supervisor.
- Review the **plan for the day** and how to request adjustments.
- Keep tasks **manageable** — pace yourself.
- Use scheduled **micro-breaks** or quiet space if part of your plan.
- Expect **two short check-ins**: mid-shift and end-of-day.

Helpful phrases

- "This task went well."
- "This part was difficult after a while—could we try *[specific adjustment]*?"
- "I need a short break/task change to work safely."

3. First 1-2 Weeks

- Follow the plan and bring up quick notes about what feels easy vs. challenging.
- Small adjustments are **normal**—that's part of the process.
- Keep communication **short, practical, and work-focused**.

4. Safety-Sensitive Situations

(Working with students, vehicles, equipment, lifting, chemicals, de-escalation)

If something feels unsafe (pain, dizziness, stress spike, reduced focus):

- **Pause the task**
- Switch to a safe task (if possible)
- **Tell your supervisor right away**

5. Red Flags — Speak Up Early

Tell your supervisor (and/or union) if:

- Symptoms worsen or recovery feels harder at work.
- Tasks drift beyond your restrictions.
- Accommodation or equipment isn't available.
- You feel excluded, questioned about your health, or uncomfortable.

You deserve a **respectful and safe** return.

6. Boundaries & Responding to Questions

It's normal to feel unsure about what to say when asked why you were away.

You do **not** have to share medical or personal information.

Helpful phrases to use with co-workers

- "It's good to be back and focusing on work again."
- "I'm easing back in with a gradual plan—it's going well so far."
- If asked personal questions:
 - "I'm keeping health details private, but I'm feeling supported and ready to work."

Helpful phrases to use with students

Keep it brief and positive:

- "I was away for a bit, but I'm happy to be back to help the class/school."
- Redirect to the activity:
"Let's get started on [activity]."

Helpful phrases to use with parents / visitors

- "I'm back on an approved plan, and everything is going smoothly."
- "You can check with the office/principal if you have questions about staffing."

If Someone Asks, "Are you safe to be back?"

Respond calmly:

- "Yes—my doctor and the district reviewed my plan to make sure it's safe."

Remember

Asking for help or adjustment is **not** a setback—it's part of returning safely and confidently.

You are not expected to figure this out alone. Your supervisor, HR, union and healthcare team are here to support you.