



# Accommodation Process Toolkit

## Employee's Handbook

### The City's Commitment

The City of Calgary is committed to assisting injured or ill employees with a safe and early return to work. In some situations, employees may not be able to do all or some of their job duties and require their job to be modified, or may need to do other forms of work (alternate). This is called accommodation. Creating an inclusive environment and accommodating employees into our workplace is the right thing to do and what's expected at The City. It's the way we live our culture and demonstrate the [4 Cs](#).

### The Duty to Accommodate

The duty to accommodate involves the employer's obligation to take **reasonable** steps, in policies or conditions of work, to accommodate an employee's individual needs. The duty applies to all grounds of discrimination covered under the Alberta Human Rights Act. This process adheres to The City of Calgary's policy on the [Duty to Accommodate in Employment](#), [The Human Rights Act](#) and The Workers Compensation Board (WCB) Act of Alberta.

**This toolkit specifically addresses accommodation for physical and/or mental disabilities.**

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## Accommodation Process Toolkit

### Accommodation Process Roles and Responsibilities

There are many people on the team that works on getting you back to work – including you. Below are some of the roles of people you may work with during the accommodation process and outlines everyone's responsibilities. Please be as open and honest as possible with the professionals who are trying to help you.

#### Your role as the employee

- Maintain contact with your leader and RTWC during the accommodation.
- Follow the recommendations of your physicians and health professionals to get better as safely and quickly as possible.
- When you require an accommodation, provide the necessary information about your abilities and needs and participate in the development of return to work plans to support an early, productive and safe return to work.

#### Leader

- Maintain contact with employees who are off work due to illness or injury, or who are at work and require an accommodation.
- Work collaboratively with the [Return to Work Coordinator](#) and/or [Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant](#) and employee to develop, implement and monitor a return to work plan.
- Search for and provide suitable work that matches your employee's abilities and needs for accommodation.
- Work with team to create the environment to support the return of the employee back to work as safely and quickly as possible.

#### Return to Work Coordinator (RTWC)

- Monitor the employee's return to work status in conjunction with the external case managers.
- Clarify the restrictions and abilities to ensure a proper plan is developed, implemented, and monitored.
- Facilitate the resolution of any issues delaying a return to work.
- Consult with the other divisions of HR and a union representative if a case is particularly complex.

#### Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant (VRC)

- Assess and identify transferable skills if employees are permanently unable to return to their base position due to their medical limitations.
- Identify and coordinate placement into suitable work within The City.

#### Business Advisory Services HR Business Partner (HRBP)

- Collaborate with RTWC or VRC to help address possible barriers to an employee's return to work.
- Provide consultation and support to leaders and employees to address employment issues.

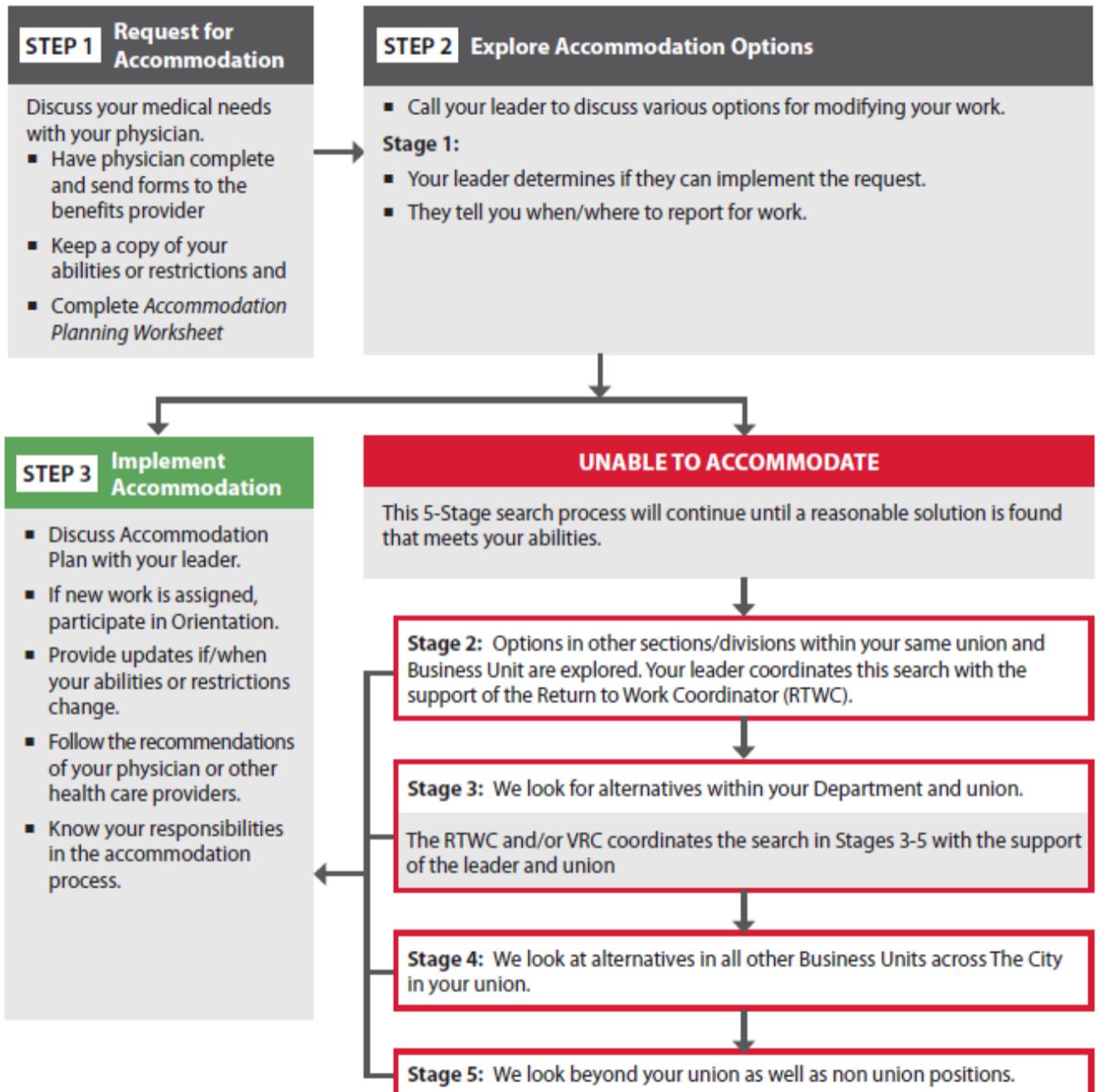
#### External Case Manager (from our benefit providers e.g. short and long-term disability or WCB)

- Receive medical information related to the employee's disability claim.
- Monitor the recovery process and advise the RTWC or VRC when the employee is fit to return to work and if the employee requires an accommodation.
- Provide details of the employee's abilities and restrictions if an accommodation is needed.

## Temporary Accommodation Process Map



### Temporary Accommodation Process Map FOR EMPLOYEES





## Accommodation Process Toolkit

### Accommodation Checklist for Employees

#### THE EMPLOYEE'S ROLE IN ACCOMMODATION

A successful accommodation happens with cooperation, good communication, flexibility and creativity from you, your leader, the Return to Work Coordinator (RTWC) and your union. Here are your responsibilities in the accommodation process.

#### Making the Request for Accommodation:

- Discuss with your physician when your health is impacting your ability to perform your work duties. An accommodation plan begins when your physician has provided objective medical information that states your ability to perform your job duties has been impacted.
- Use the tools and contacts available in this information package and the resource list to support you through the process.
- Complete the appropriate paperwork.
- Notify your leader to let them know you need modifications to your job as soon as possible so the accommodation process can begin.

#### Gather the Facts and Explore Options:

- Maintain contact with your leader throughout the search process. Your leader will try to accommodate you in your own job or work area first. If that is not possible based on your restrictions, they will collaborate with a RTWC to search for options outside your work area.
- Provide complete, accurate and current documentation on your needs throughout the accommodation process.
- Collaborate and cooperate with your leader and union throughout the accommodation process.
- Participate in the development and implementation of plans that support your early and safe return to work. Accept a solution that reasonably accommodates your needs. The City's obligation as an employer is described in the [Alberta Human Rights Act](#).
- Understand that if you refuse to accept a solution that reasonably accommodates your needs, The City's obligation to accommodate you may end. Depending on the facts of your case, your refusal could affect your continued employment at The City.

#### You have been accommodated – what now?

- Meet the required performance expectations of the position or assigned work once you have been accommodated.
- Follow recommendations of physicians and/or health care providers to support your recovery and returning to your full duties.
- Inform your leader if there are changes in your abilities or restrictions, and provide supporting documentation.
- Ensure the benefit provider has current medical information from your physician or treatment provider. This is only applicable if you are receiving benefits while being accommodated (Sickness & Accident, Long Term Disability or WCB).

Use the checklist on the next page as you move through each step of the accommodation process.

## Step 1: Start with Request for Accommodation

An accommodation process begins when The City receives notice that you can return to work with medical restrictions.

- Discuss with:
  - A physician at Occupational Injury Services (OIS) and have them complete an OIS Physician Progress Report - WCB claims only
  - or**
  - Your physician about your medical restrictions and have them complete the [Return to Work with Restrictions \(X428\)](#) for all other accommodation requests.
  - Have your physician's office send the completed form to your benefit provider if you have a current S&A, LTD or WCB claim. Keep a copy for yourself.
  - Review your restrictions and complete the Accommodation Planning Worksheet.
  - Contact your leader to discuss abilities and restrictions.

## Step 2: Gather the Facts and Explore Accommodation Options

- Discuss with your leader what parts of your job you can and cannot perform based on your abilities. Talk about any new restrictions and/or options for work based on your discussions with your physician and ideas from the Accommodation Planning Worksheet.
- Raise any concerns you have about the options, if any, with your leader.
- Request support from your union if you need it.
- Maintain contact with your leader even as alternative work options outside your own position and work area are explored.
- Your leader contacts you with an offer of accommodation and details on what you will be doing and when you start.

## Step 3: Implement Accommodation

- Review and discuss the Return to Work Plan and any orientation required with your leader.
- Ensure time entries are correct in [myHRconnect](#) (self-service employees only).
- Meet regularly with your leader. You might want to set up a schedule.

## Step 4: Monitoring Accommodation

- If there are changes to your abilities and/or medical restrictions, have your physician complete the [Return to Work with Restrictions \(X428\)](#) form or provide updated medical information to your benefit provider.
  - Discuss any changes with your leader.
- Contact the RTWC with questions about your situation or the process.



## Accommodation Process Toolkit

### Accommodation Planning Worksheet

We want you to feel better and get your daily life back to normal; this includes returning to work. If you have an injury or illness, and are healing, you may need to change how you do your work to support your recovery. Thinking of ideas for suitable modified work options will help you get back to work while recovering.

Modifying your job, performing different tasks or reducing your hours are all types of modified work. These would help you to recover faster while working as well as help you stay connected with your colleagues.

Brainstorming options for modified work will help you get back to work successfully. After you have discussed your medical needs with your physician, use this worksheet to help you think about what work you can do while recovering. It helps you prepare for discussing options with your leader.

#### Your regular job:

1. What parts of your job do you feel you can perform while recovering? (Sometimes an injury or illness can limit the duties you used to do, however, we want to focus on the duties you can do while recovering).
2. Would you be able to do any of your regular duties for a reduced amount of time? (e.g. 4 hours versus 8 hours) If so, which ones?
3. How could tools or equipment and ergonomics solutions make it easier for me to complete my job? Examples: introduce carts, handles, hoists or power tools.
4. What assistive devices or aids would support me with my needs and allow me to continue to do my own job?

#### Other jobs:

1. Do you know of any other jobs/tasks outside of your own work you could perform while recovering?
2. Do you have other experience, skills or education you could use in other areas of your workplace?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this document. It will help your Leader and Return to Work Coordinator work with you in creating a plan for your accommodation.



## Accommodation Process Toolkit

### Accommodation Infosheet

#### What you need to know when your accommodation is outside your work area

Following contact from your Return to Work Coordinator (RTWC) or Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant (VRC), you can expect a phone call from your new alternate work leader before your accommodation starts. The purpose of the call is to welcome you back to work, gather, and share information about the work you will be starting. A separate meeting will be scheduled to review the job duties, pay, vacation, work schedule, Return to Work Plan, performance and attendance expectations.

#### Return to Work Plan

Please be familiar with your Return to Plan. You should have received a copy of it from the RTWC, VRC or your new work leader. Review the information to ensure it accurately reflects your medical restrictions. If there are any differences between it and your understanding, contact your physician or benefit provider immediately. Then inform your RTWC or VRC.

#### Your Role and Responsibilities

##### You have the responsibility to:

- Carry out the duties of the position to the best of your abilities.
- Meet the performance expectations of the work.
- If things are not clear, ask questions to better understand what is required.
- Attend work on a regular and consistent basis as medically cleared by your physician.
- If unable to attend work, contact your leader to report your absence. Your leader may inquire as to the nature of the absence to provide support and information to you.
- Contact your benefit provider regarding your absence from work.
- Comply with all rules, procedures, policy and legislation requirements.
- You will receive a safety orientation, but if any safety issues are identified, speak with your leader.

#### Code of Conduct

As a City employee, you are expected to treat clients, coworkers and the public with respect and dignity. And you can also expect to be treated with respect and dignity while at work.

#### Monitor changes in your abilities

If there are changes in your abilities and/or medical restrictions during your accommodation, inform your leader and the RTWC or VRC. You will need to provide supporting documentation, usually completed by your physician on the [Return to Work with Restrictions](#) (X428) form.

If you are receiving benefits while being accommodated (e.g. Sickness & Accident, Long Term Disability or WCB), ensure your benefit provider has current medical information from your physician or treatment provider.



## Accommodation Process Toolkit

### Top 5 Accommodation Myths and Biases

The success an employer has in supporting an employee returning to work depends on many factors. Our culture of the 4 Cs, our Code of Conduct and Employee Promise sets the standards for expected behaviours in our organization. However, sometimes accommodations can be made based on misinformation, negative stereotypes, biases, unfounded fears and personal inconvenience.

Many individuals returning after a health leave report being treated differently – even stigmatized. This experience influences the employee's level of engagement and ultimately impacts our reputation as an employer.

Return-to-work beliefs can be based on half-truths, overgeneralizations or inaccurate information. While some myths can be easily changed with better understanding, others are extremely resistant and can become chronic problems in an organization.

**MYTH: 100% or NOTHING:** The belief that employees must be able to do 100% of their job duties before returning to work.

**Reality:** Not necessarily. Employees can regain their ability to work by transitioning back into the workplace gradually. In most cases, job duties can be modified for short periods of time without reducing the overall productivity of the organization.

#### What Can You Do?

##### As a leader:

Examine ways that employees can resume job activities in a safe manner. You may wish to do some or all of the following:

- Talk to your employee before they come back to find out what support they need.
- Explore temporary work options if applicable such as reduced hours or limited responsibilities.
- Explore modified or alternate work and work with your RTW Coordinator and/or Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant.
- Speak with your team and let them know about any potential temporary changes to how work gets done and how they can support the returning employee.

##### As an employee returning to work:

- Communicate with your leader, RTW Coordinator and/or Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant what you can and can't do based on your medical fitness for work.
- Provide updates to your leader, RTW Coordinator, and/or Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant if your medical restrictions change so they can be reviewed.
- Ask for help and support from your leader or coworkers if you are unable to complete the work.
- Ask for support if you need additional help to complete job duties or if there are any concerns.

##### As a co-worker:

- Ask the accommodated employee if you can provide support with the job duties they are unable to do.
- Be flexible and open-minded to potential temporary changes that may alter your day to day activities.
- Make a conscious effort to include them in meetings.



## Accommodation Process Toolkit

**MYTH: Most injured workers are fakers:** The perception that people who are off work must be faking it.

**Reality:** This is false. Like you, the majority of employees want to come back to work, be productive and contribute as soon as possible.

### What Can You Do?

#### As a leader:

Support your employee and find out what they need to get back to work as early and safely as possible.

- Check your assumptions. If you have questions or concerns, discuss them with your [RTW Coordinator](#), [Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant](#) or [HR Business Partner](#).

#### As an employee returning to work:

Be curious and aware of your own unconscious biases that could affect how you show up to your colleagues during your accommodation.

- Be curious and aware of your unconscious biases and how you show up during your accommodation can impact the team.
- Have a conversation with your leader and/or your team members to let them know what help you need.
- Ask for support from your leader if you experience any bias.

#### As a co-worker:

- Be aware of your unconscious bias and change your behaviour if you notice it is affecting how you treat this person.
- If you are suspicious of an accommodation request, discuss your concerns with your leader.
- Have discussions with coworkers about unconscious biases and the impact on the team environment.

**MYTH: "It's not my Job":** The belief that as a leader, employee or co-worker you have nothing to do with employees returning to work or in accommodation. It's commonly believed that it's the disability insurance provider's exclusive responsibility to bring the employee back to work in a safe and timely manner.

**Reality:** The primary role of the benefit provider is to provide income protection while an employee is unable to work. The role of returning employees to work is a partnership between the benefit provider, employee, employer, physician, and at times the union. The provider can assist in developing a return-to-work plan, defining the expected length of time for recovery with the attending physician and defining a reasonable accommodation. We are collectively accountable to create a supportive and welcoming atmosphere for employees returning to work.

### What Can You Do?

#### As a leader:

- Create clear and consistent return-to-work expectations. See leader orientation checklist
- Prepare your team for the employee's return to work by providing information on the accommodation and answering team questions. For more details see the accommodation link FAQ on what you can share with other employees.
- Check in regularly with the team and the employee returning to work.



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### As an employee returning to work:

- Follow recommendations of physicians and health professionals to improve your recovery.
- Participate in the development of the return to work plan to ensure an early productive and safe return to work.
- Cooperate in the accommodation process.

### As a co-worker:

- Set up a team lunch, give a welcome back card, or invite them for coffee
- Help your co-worker return to work by creating a supportive and welcoming work environment.
- Ask how they are doing and provide support when required.

**MYTH: “I can’t do anything for my employee”:** The belief that it’s very difficult to accommodate an employee with a mental illness.

**Reality:** Leaders and co-workers are in a powerful position to help reduce the stigma that often accompanies mental illness. Accommodation is specific to an individual and their job. Employees with mental health concerns may not have functional limitations. Someone with depression or an anxiety disorder might find that accommodation helps them to work much more productively.

### What Can You Do?

The workplace can be an important influence to help someone get the treatment and services they need to support their recovery. The leader and co-worker can help by:

- Reaching out and letting them know you are available to help.
- Helping them access mental health resources.
- Treating them with respect, just as you would anyone else.
- Refusing to define them by their diagnosis or using labels such as "crazy."
- Creating a supportive, safe and inclusive environment – it is critical for individuals with mental health conditions to work with colleagues and leadership who are positive, open, and welcoming.
- Adjusting your approach to supervising – it could be as simple as scheduling recurring one-on-one meetings to see how things are going. Check-ins may also help people manage problems before they become stressful and overwhelming,
- Working with your Return to Work Coordinator, or Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant to see if you need to offer flexible schedules – flexible start/stop times also allow individuals to perform duties when they can be most productive. Flexible or extended breaks may also help them manage stress or attend healthcare appointments.
- Working with your Return to Work Coordinator or Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant to discuss whether telework might support your employee – telework may remove the exposure to the stressors of commuting and eliminating that time on the road, making it easier to be productive when beginning the workday. Working from home may also provide a substantially more comfortable environment for the employee, which may significantly reduce stress and anxiety.

### Finding the Right Words to Say

#### What Not to Say

#### Instead Try

"How's your health?"	"How can we help you do your job?"
"You seem depressed."	"You're not your usual self."
"Snap out of it."	"Do you want to talk about it?"
"Think positive."	"It's always okay to ask for help."
"I know exactly what you're going through."	"It's hard for me to understand exactly what you're going through, but I can see that it's distressing for you."

**MYTH: The lazy worker:** The belief that injured workers are lazy and have a sense of entitlement. They just want to sit at home and get paid.

**Reality:** Injured employees don't want to be off work, they want to recover from their injury or illness and get back to work where they can earn their full wages and interact with friends and colleagues. Sometimes this takes a while. And for some employees, a return to full-duties isn't possible.

### What Can You Do?

#### As a leader:

- Be patient; in most straightforward cases, the employee will resume their full duties in under 4 weeks.
- Acknowledge and be understanding that your employee has sustained an injury or illness at work or in their personal life and there could be an adjustment period before they are ready to return to work.
- Encourage conversation with your employee and ask how you can support them through the accommodation and return to work process. Conversations should be a norm rather than an exception.
- Discuss this myth with your team to uncover any biases, as awareness will lead to changes in behaviour.

#### As an employee returning to work:

- Be ready to show up at work and work within the guidelines of your return to work plan.
- Have an open mind to try working differently and do not be afraid to ask for help.
- Communicate your work progress with your leader and if necessary with coworkers for tasks that require teamwork.
- Notify your leader or the [Return to Work Coordinator](#) (or VRC) if the assigned work is impacting your recovery.

#### As a co-worker:

- Be patient and understand that the employee returning to work has sustained an injury or illness and needs time to recover.
- Act from the perspective that most employees recovering from an illness want to return to work and be productive.
- Contribute to a safe and inclusive environment.

**How can you help in general:** Beliefs and unconscious biases influence our perspective and behaviour towards others. We all have biases, and are often not even aware of them and how they impact us. Evaluate and examine your own values, attitudes and behaviour towards injured or ill employees by doing a quick [pulse check of your unconscious biases](#).

- Educate people who demonstrate stigmatizing attitudes and behaviours towards others.
- Have a simple conversation with affected employees and find out what will work for them.
- Act when you witness behaviour that's not in line with The City's expectations. Challenge the not so obvious; remember that not all injuries or illnesses are visible. Just because someone isn't using an assistive device doesn't mean they're not injured or ill.

Debunking return-to-work myths is the first step in reducing the negative impact of stigma towards accommodation and creating a culture that aligns with our 4 Cs and supports diversity and inclusion.

### Frequently Asked Questions about Workplace Accommodation

This page provides employees with general answers to frequently asked questions on the duty to accommodate.

#### **Do I have to tell The City why I need to be accommodated?**

The City must balance the privacy interests of the employee and the information it needs as the employer. You may be reluctant to share medical or personal information with contact at The City. For some employees, this information is private and they do not want it shared with anyone. Some employees are also concerned that their employer will not keep their information confidential, leaving them vulnerable to workplace harassment.

You need to provide some information to support a request for accommodation. As your employer, The City is entitled to sufficient information about your need to be accommodated, suitable accommodations and your prognosis.

The City may require a report from your doctor, which concentrates on the functional or other limitations that require accommodation. It should not recite the medical condition. If The City has concerns or doubts about the information, it may ask for another opinion or for an outside expert's assessment. Even so, the focus is on how best to accommodate limitations, rather than the medical condition itself.

#### **What is The City entitled to know about my medical condition?**

The City is only entitled to receive the information necessary to accommodate you. This includes expert or professional verification of your abilities and limitations which helps The City accommodate you, and a professional estimate of how long you will need to be accommodated. The City has no access to your diagnosis or treatment plan.

#### **Who at The City has access to my medical records?**

Information on your abilities and limitations is kept under strict confidence and shared with those who need to know to implement your accommodation. This may include you:

- Vocational Rehabilitation Consultants (VRCs)
- Return to Work Coordinators (RTWC)
- Leader

#### **What if I do not like the job I am presented with as part of the accommodation process?**

As part of your accountability in getting back to work, you are expected to explore options, participate in the development of the plans and accept a solution that reasonably accommodates your needs.

Understand that if you refuse to accept a solution that reasonably accommodates your needs, The City's obligation to accommodate you may end. Depending on the facts of your case, your refusal could affect your continued employment at The City.

#### **What can The City or my union tell other employees about my accommodation?**

The City and your union must/are obliged to respect your right to privacy and confidentiality when it comes to workplace accommodation.



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Other employees will be provided only with the information they need to work safely and efficiently with you. This may include details about the accommodation such as your duties, role

or responsibility change. Often, other employees will only have the information they need to set up your accommodation.

During the accommodation planning process, both you and The City will discuss how much information will be disclosed to other employees. Doing so will help the parties to determine the minimum necessary disclosure.

### **I am reluctant to come forward with my need for accommodation as I have a mental health condition and am concerned about how I may be treated. What are The City's expectations to support me?**

You may not want to disclose a visible or invisible disability to your supervisors or colleagues because of people's unconscious biases. The accommodation planning process provides an opportunity for both parties to discuss how much information is disclosed. It also allows your work accommodation team to design an accommodation that raises the fewest questions or concerns in the workplace. Sometimes, however, there does need to be some disclosure for health and safety reasons. If this is required, you will be notified first.

## Employee Resources

The resources below are intended to support leaders through the accommodation process. For further information, please contact the [Return to Work Coordinator](#) assigned to your business unit.

### How can we help you?

What is your need?	Contact:
I am requesting a temporary or permanent accommodation as a result of an illness or injury, supported by documents on my medical restrictions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your leader</li> <li><a href="#">Return to Work Coordinator</a></li> <li><a href="#">Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant</a></li> </ul>
I need general information and advice on health and wellness in general.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visit the <a href="#">Wellness</a> website</li> <li>Contact your Employee Wellness Ambassador</li> <li>Contact your <a href="#">Human Resources Wellness Consultant</a></li> </ul>
I need help reporting time for Sickness and Accident (S&A).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your leader</li> <li><a href="#">Pay Services</a></li> </ul>
I need support with WCB or long-term disability payments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Corporate Pay</a></li> </ul>
I need support regarding an accommodation outside of my base position.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your leader</li> <li><a href="#">Return to Work Coordinator</a></li> </ul>
I need support as I have a complex case and may have potential to impact my collective agreement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your Leader</li> <li><a href="#">Union Representative</a></li> </ul>
I'm not sure where to start and need to talk it through.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HR Support Services (403-268-5800)</li> </ul>

### Links and Information within The City:

[Safety](#): Information on how to keep yourself safe and healthy within the workplace.

[WCB Process](#): Information on your role as a leader when your employee is going through a worker's compensation claim. The process is broken down in basic steps.

[Unconscious Bias](#): Become more familiar with your unconscious biases and how they may impact behaviours within the workplace.

[Wellness Resources](#): Provides information on health and wellness services to keep employees active and healthy.

### Links and Information from External Sources:

[WCB Alberta](#): Workers Compensation Website for information on the WCB legislative changes and the process.

[Alberta Human Rights Legislation](#): Outlines the employment rules, practices, conditions or requirements required to meet prohibited grounds status.

[Employee Family Assistance Program \(EFAP\)](#): Provides coaching and counselling for you and your families.



## Accommodation Process Toolkit

### Contacts:

If you need further help with your accommodation request, workplace issues and concerns, contact your leader, [Return to Work Coordinator/Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant](#), [HR Support Services](#), and/or your [union representative](#).