



# Work ability support measures

## Objective

Work ability support practices are consistent and known and used by everyone.

## Why?

Commonly agreed practices provide a framework for supporting work ability. They help management and supervisors anticipate future situations and act consistently. The practices help employees understand how the workplace supports work ability, what the support tasks and responsibilities of various parties are, and that the workplace supports work ability equally.

## Methods for developing and implementing the practices

### Find solutions to support work ability together

Consistent work ability support practices ensure that the workplace acts proactively, consistently and equally when supporting work ability. The practices help employees understand how the workplace supports work ability, what the support tasks are, and what the responsibilities of the employer and employee are.

### Set concrete and measurable goals for work ability management

Set the goals related to the employees' wellbeing at work, work ability and occupational safety for the future, and anticipate the impact of possible changes on employees.

The goals must be concrete, realistic and measurable. Communicate the goals actively and clearly to ensure that everyone is aware of them.

The planning of the practices should be done in collaboration with management, supervisors and employee representatives and should be documented.

The practices are aimed at

**1. Maintaining and promoting work ability, including**

- induction training
- competence development
- sickness absences
- early support for work ability, communication during sickness absence and support for returning to work
- intervening in discrimination and inappropriate treatment.

**2. Follow-up and development of occupational safety, including**

- risk assessment
- reporting, processing and learning from safety observations, accidents and near misses
- maintaining/updating action plans.

## **Define tasks and responsibilities**

The promotion and support of work ability concerns the entire workplace. Successful implementation of work ability support practices is facilitated by practices with clearly defined tasks and responsibilities for management, supervisors and employees. In addition, it must be ensured that the workplace also communicates the practices and monitors how they function in daily work.

## **Plan orientation**

According to **the Occupational Safety And Health Act** (in Finnish and Swedish), the employer must provide the employee orientation to the work and working conditions, as well as the proper use of work equipment and safe working practices. Orientation ensures that the employee manages his work tasks, that the workflows, and that the employee integrates into the work community. Orientation is usually responsibility of the supervisor, who introduces the employee to the practices and rules of the workplace. However, orientation to the actual work tasks can also be assigned to another person who is familiar with them. Work ability support practices, such as communicating during sickness absence, are an important part of orientation.

## Draw up an occupational safety and health policy

According to [the Occupational Safety And Health Act](#) (in Finnish and Swedish), all employers are obligated to draw up an occupational safety and health policy that defines the objectives of occupational health and safety at the workplace and activities to maintain work ability. The occupational safety and health policy also clarifies occupational safety responsibilities and practices, as well as the implementation method of occupational safety and health collaboration.

## Agree on procedures for reporting and handling accidents and near misses

Making safety observations (hazard reports, near miss reports) and discussing them is one way to maintain and develop workplace safety. Reporting near misses is known to reduce the number of workplace accidents.

The channel used for reporting safety observations should be chosen together with the employees and be suitable for daily life at the workplace. Reporting can be done, for example, by phone, email, WhatsApp or system logs. It is essential to collect observations in one place to facilitate processing, enable corrective measures, allow lessons to be learned at the workplace, and provide feedback to the person who made the observation.

The analysis and reporting of accidents and near misses provides information on various factors that threaten safety and issues that need to be corrected in work processes, work equipment and the work environment. The processing of near misses and safety observations promotes proactive safety development, and the information obtained from them can also be used as a starting point for a risk assessment. Providing feedback to employees on safety observations and corrective actions encourages employees to be more proactive in making observations.

## Tools

- [Substance Abuse Programme Tool \(ttl.fi\)](#)
- [An operational model for occupational health collaboration that supports mental health \(ttl.fi\)](#) (only in Finnish)
- [Occupational safety and health policy | Occupational Safety and Health Administration \(Tyosuojelu.fi\)](#)

## Additional reading

- [Proper orientation always pays off | Finnish Institute of Occupational Health \(ttl.fi\)](#) (only in Finnish)
- [Supporting work ability at the workplace | Suomi.fi](#)