



# Workplace Ergonomic Adaptations Keep STD Exactly That — Short Term

## Background

Liz Masters\*, a 28 year old Communications Specialist in an IT Department, was involved in a motor vehicle accident. Although she sustained some residual medical issues related to neck pain and headaches, she continued to work part-time. Six months later, the pain became too severe for her to continue and her doctor recommended that she stop working, rest, and undertake physical therapy. As a result, Liz filed a short term disability claim. Based on the claimant’s report, the treating provider viewed her job as sedentary with strict prolonged sitting.



## Evaluating Workplace Solutions

Once case management was initiated, the STD assignment was immediately referred to John Runzo, a Guardian vocational rehabilitation specialist, for further evaluation. John began the case review with the question “why?” — “Why can Liz not sit or stand at the workplace? If the claimant could change position as needed, could she return to work?” John first addressed his inquiry with the employer, then the doctor, to ensure a complete workplace assessment. In addition, Liz’s doctor reported she could return to work if able to change positions from sit-to-stand as desired.

An assigned local vocational ergonomic specialist visited the worksite and performed a job analysis. The assessment determined that Liz would need to physically change positions often as well as avert excessive neck bending to avoid exacerbating her condition by sitting at a computer desk and staring at a monitor. The workplace evaluation also revealed that the workstation was too high, causing Liz to move her neck extensively.

After completing the assessment and several communications with both employer and doctor, recommendations were made for some ergonomic adaptations. This included a hydraulic sit-stand workstation and an ergonomic chair, but the employer was concerned about costs. They were relieved to learn that Guardian would reimburse up to \$2500 of related expenses.

*“Doctors may understand the claimant’s physical abilities, but they may have less understanding of the job duties. At the same time, employers tend to know more about the job and less about a worker’s physical abilities — only they are less inclined to ask questions. That’s when I step in and facilitate communications to find an optimal return to work solution.”*

**John Runzo, CDMS, CCM**  
Rehabilitation Specialist

## Happily Returned to Work

As recommended (and doctor approved), the equipment was purchased and Liz was able to safely return to work in a situation that would minimize the strain and neck extension she previously experienced. Meanwhile, the employer was able to retain a valued employee at no cost to them. The good news: Liz returned to work prior to the end of her short term claim, thus preventing both the likelihood of a long term claim as well as possible termination from her employer. That’s when customers realize the true value of Guardian’s Short Term Disability benefits.

**Contact your Guardian Group Sales Representative for more information.**

\* The name has been changed to protect her identity. Guardian’s Group Disability Insurance is underwritten and issued by The Guardian Life Insurance Company of America, New York, NY. Products are not available in all states. Policy limitations and exclusions apply. Optional riders and/or features may incur additional costs. This policy provides disability income insurance only. It does NOT provide basic hospital, basic medical or major medical insurance as defined by the New York State Department of Financial Services. Plan documents are the final arbiter of coverage. Policy Form #GP-1-LTD07-1.0, et al. Long Term Disability Policy Form # GP-1-LTD07-1.0

