

## Communications Toolkit for RETAIN Awardees

### Overview/Contents

Welcome to the *Communications Toolkit for RETAIN Awardees*. This document and its supporting materials are designed to help you develop branded, message-consistent communications materials for your RETAIN demonstration projects. Contents Include:

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If you have questions about this document or requests for specific communications-related technical assistance (TA), please contact your RETAIN TA state liaison at [RETAINTA@air.org](mailto:RETAINTA@air.org).

## **RETAIN Communications Checklist**

Are you working on the communications and outreach strategy for your RETAIN project? If you have not done so already, we suggest you complete the steps in the following RETAIN Communications Checklist and access the tools mentioned throughout this document. All of the materials can be found in the “[Communications Corner](#)” of the RETAIN Online Community (ROC).

- Complete the action steps outlined in the *Communications Roadmap for RETAIN Awardees*. (See separate [Roadmap](#) document.)
- Based on that outline, develop a strategic communications plan for your RETAIN project.
- Develop and select a name and graphic brand for your project. (Note: We recommend that you use the established national RETAIN brand customized with your state name. See [State-Specific Brands](#) later in this *Toolkit*.)
- Adopt a team style guide for your project. (See [Style Consistency](#) later in this *Toolkit*.)
- Based on tactics outlined in your communications plan, complete *RETAIN Materials Planning Outline(s)* to map out digital and hardcopy materials you wish to develop. (See [Materials Planning Outline](#) questionnaire.)
- Leverage art files and templates provided by the TA team as needed, for example, RETAIN graphic typeface, fact sheet template, and PowerPoint template. (See [RETAIN Brand Guidelines](#) later in this *Toolkit*.)
- Create your communications materials and pursue other tactics outlined in your plan. (Refer to [RETAIN messaging](#) later in this document and remember best practices for [accessibility](#).)
- Request assistance from the RETAIN Communications TA team as needed throughout the process. (Contact your RETAIN TA state liaison at [RETAINTA@air.org](mailto:RETAINTA@air.org).)

## **RETAIN Brand Guidelines**

### ***The RETAIN Brand/Art Files***

The “[Communications Corner](#)” of the ROC is your home for communications tools and guidance. Among the tools you will find there are jpeg, eps, and png files for the RETAIN brand. This is the graphic typeface that the U.S. Department of Labor’s (DOL’s) Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) uses to brand the national initiative, and we strongly encourage you to incorporate the graphic typeface into your own materials as a way to associate your RETAIN state team as part of a larger whole.

The ROC includes versions of this graphic with and without the acronym spelled out, as well as black and white versions and color formats.



### ***State-Specific Brands***

ODEP strongly encourages your project to adopt a “RETAIN [State Name]” brand and to customize the national graphic to be state specific. (Please see the *RETAIN Kansas* example below.) Including RETAIN in your state-specific brand acknowledges the collaborative nature of these programs across the federal government and state teams. To that end, the RETAIN TA team will supply you with a customized state graphic for your use.



### ***RETAIN Fact Sheet and PowerPoint Templates***

The ROC includes a [template](#) for basic fact sheets, backgrounders, and other documents you may wish to create. Simply add your copy to the template and save it as a PDF. (Please note that the fact sheet template contains placeholder “Lorem Ipsum” text, which is intended for you to overwrite with your own content.) You can also add the logos of your team’s organization(s) to the footer of the template. A RETAIN PowerPoint design is also included that contains a title slide and several interior slide templates. Feel free to populate and use this template to create branded slide decks about your project. Just remember to take steps to ensure your program documents and PowerPoints are accessible. (See the [Accessibility](#) section of this document.)

If you would like us to adapt these templates to include your state-specific branding, please let us know. We will be happy to work with you!

### ***Required Language on Written Materials***

Awardees are expected to mention RETAIN’s affiliation with ODEP and DOL in the written text of official RETAIN products and documents. Here is the exact language to include:

#### **Documents, Publications, and Slide Presentations:**

*“Preparation of this item was fully funded by the United States Department of Labor in the amount of <insert award amount> under Cooperative Agreement No. <insert number>.”*

*This document does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Labor, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.”*

#### **Press Releases and Other Communications:**

*“This cooperative agreement is fully funded by the United States Department of Labor in the amount of <insert award amount> under Cooperative Agreement No. <insert number>.”*

### ***Use of DOL, ODEP, and SSA Logos/Seals***

We encourage you to include your team logo, and the logos of your partner organizations, in the materials you develop as appropriate. If you believe that certain materials and designs would benefit from use of official DOL, ODEP, or Social Security Administration (SSA) seals or logos, please contact your federal project officer and/or RETAIN TA state liaison.

On a case-by-case basis, the DOL, ODEP, and SSA seals or logos may be applied to RETAIN-funded materials prepared for worldwide distribution, including posters, videos, pamphlets, research documents, national survey results, impact evaluations, best practice reports, and other publications of global interest. However, before the final draft or final preparations for distribution, awardees must consult with DOL on whether the logo can be used on such items. DOL will contact SSA for concurrence before allowing the SSA logo to be used. In no event shall the DOL, ODEP, or SSA seals or logo be placed on any item until DOL has granted such use to the awardee through written permission.

## ***Style Consistency***

Does your organization have its own style guide? A style guide is a set of standards for writing and designing documents, either for general use or for a specific publication or organization. You can use the style guide to help ensure uniformity within and across multiple documents.

When drafting copy for your written materials for the RETAIN demonstration project, be sure to follow the style guidelines set forth by your lead organization’s communications department, if applicable. If you do not have a designated style to follow, we recommend that you adopt a “house style” (i.e., a style guide for your project) and stick to it. This will ensure consistency within a brochure, website, or guide and across all the written materials for your project.

Some common style guides you can adopt include the [Associated Press \(AP\) Stylebook](#) and the [Chicago Manual of Style](#).

At minimum, it is helpful to create a quick-reference style sheet that identifies how to treat the following items in your written copy:

- Numbers (Do you spell out numbers one through nine and use numerical characters for numbers 10 and up?)
- Serial or “Oxford” commas (Do you include or omit a comma after “oranges” in a series such as “apples, oranges, and pears”?)
- Dashes (Do you use long em dashes (—)? How are they spaced in a parenthetical phrase?)
- Bullet points (Do you include punctuation after bullets in a series?)
- Commonly used words (Do you capitalize “state” or “federal”? Is “healthcare” one word or two words? How do you treat “email” or “webpage”? Think about the confusing words that are likely to appear in your copy and make a list of how to treat them.)

ODEP also recommends the use of “people-first” language when referring to people with disabilities. To learn more about this topic, visit the Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion’s [guidance on people-first language](#).

## ***Accessibility***

It is crucial that documents, websites, and all other RETAIN materials be accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities. That means ensuring materials are compliant with the standards set forth in Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and/or the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (WCAG).

Basic best practices for accessibility include tagging images with descriptive text and using a logical tagged reading order so that people using screen readers and other assistive technologies can access content in the sequence intended. It is also important to follow [plain language guidelines](#) in your writing. These practices make content more usable for *all* stakeholders.

By the nature of your work, you and your fellow RETAIN awardees are likely familiar with accessibility best practices already. For those who need a refresher, there are numerous online resources to consult, such as:

- [The Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology's \(PEAT\) Digital Accessibility Basics](#),
- [PEAT's Accessible Web Design and Development Resources](#), and
- [Adobe's PDF Accessibility Overview](#).

## **Talking About RETAIN**

### ***The "Elevator Pitch"***

If you need a quick description about RETAIN for a general audience, here's a sample "elevator pitch" for you to adapt as appropriate. Be sure to customize your description with details about the focus of your state's demonstration project.

**RETAIN [State Name]** is part of a grant program funded by the federal government called RETAIN, which stands for Retaining Employment and Talent After Injury/Illness Network.

Led by the U.S. Department of Labor in collaboration with the Social Security Administration, the RETAIN program is evaluating effective stay-at-work and return-to-work (SAW/RTW) strategies that can keep people in the labor force following illness or injury.

The government saw the need to help employers and physicians get people back to work after they get hurt or sick, and they awarded a grant to our state to establish **RETAIN [State Name]**. Thanks to that funding, we, in coordination with a variety of partners, are improving access to SAW/RTW services and helping people stay on the job.

### ***The RETAIN Awardees***

If you want to add more detail to your pitch, the following information may be helpful.

- RETAIN's eight state awardees are
  - California Employment Development Department,
  - Connecticut Department of Labor,
  - Kansas Department of Commerce,
  - Kentucky Department of Workforce Investment,
  - Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development,
  - Ohio Department of Job and Family Services,
  - Vermont Department of Labor, and
  - Washington Employment Security Department.

- Central to all state RETAIN projects is the early coordination of health care and employment-related supports and services to help injured or ill workers remain in the workforce. These supports and services include:
  - Training in the best practices of occupational health for participating treating physicians;
  - Active involvement of an RTW coordinator throughout the medical recovery period to facilitate continued employment;
  - Enhanced communication among workers, employers, and health care professionals;
  - Accommodations and job modifications; and
  - Retraining and vocational rehabilitation services.

- [Insert details about your own state’s project/focus]

### ***Audience-Specific Messaging***

You want to tailor your messaging for specific audiences, especially RETAIN’s three stakeholder groups: workers, employers, and treating physicians. Guidance for messaging each audience is presented below. For specific messaging related to recruiting such stakeholders for your program, please see the sample [scripts](#) in the ROC.

#### ***Audience-Specific Messaging for Workers***

- RETAIN [State Name] is a free, grant-funded program focused on helping people whose lives have recently been disrupted because of an injury, illness, or worsening health problem. We help them navigate the road to recovery and get their everyday lives back on track as quickly as possible.
- The goal is to help them get better and back to their usual responsibilities at home and at work—preferably with a full paycheck.
- Injured and ill workers have a lot to deal with, and maybe some worries about the future. And they may wish they had someone to turn to—to listen to their situation, give some advice, and point them toward solutions.
- That’s what RETAIN [State Name] offers. We help people navigate a path forward as they recover and rebound. We help them create a step-by-step roadmap to getting life back to normal so they can feel better and start to resume daily routines, responsibilities, and pleasures—again, preferably with a full paycheck.
- Everyone knows that pay is a big benefit of getting back to work. But there are other important benefits, too. From a **health** perspective, being active and feeling productive can help to
  - Speed up recovery,
  - Reduce the risk of getting hurt or sick again, and
  - Reduce the chance of getting a second health problem that can slow down recovery.
- And then there’s the positive effect on someone’s **quality of life**. RETAIN [State Name] helps people to
  - Keep their daily schedules and stay connected with other people,
  - Stay involved and have a sense of purpose, and
  - Keep up their skills.

*Note: See the sample [scripts](#) in the ROC for more messaging related to program specifics, benefits for participating workers, etc.*

#### Audience-Specific Messaging for Employers

- **RETAIN [State Name]** is a new (and free) grant-funded program that helps workers who are out of work due to a new or worsened health problem. Our goal is to get these workers back on the job promptly and safely.
- The program opens the lines of communication between doctors and employers to enable injured and ill employees to return to work more rapidly. Our expert coordinators often suggest solutions to common problems that can needlessly prolong work absence and lead to job loss for workers—not to mention unnecessary turnover for employers like you.
- We provide employers with timely and expert assistance with and strategies for the stay-at-work (SAW) and return-to-work (RTW) process that can
  - Help employers minimize workplace disruption and retain valuable employees—all while saving time, money, and effort;
  - Help worker(s) feel better and get back to work sooner so that they make the best possible recovery and maintain their personal well-being and financial stability; and
  - Help our community keep our workers employed and financially self-sustaining instead of dependent on disability income programs.
- To do this, **RETAIN [State Name]** offers our services as a trusted intermediary to employers, workers, and to their treating physician.
- A few important points about our program:
  - It is voluntary for the worker, employer, treating provider, and any other involved party, such as an insurer. We presume each party has an interest in helping workers get everyday life back on track—which includes doing their jobs.
  - We focus on outcomes. The success (and continued funding) of our program depends on earning the trust of and producing satisfactory results for employers, workers, and their treating physicians. So, we are very focused on getting you results.
  - Finally, we carefully protect medical and other personal information in compliance with state and federal privacy laws.

*Note: See the sample [scripts](#) in the ROC for more messaging related to program specifics, benefits for employers, etc.*



### Audience-Specific Messaging for Treating Physicians

- **RETAIN [State Name]** is a new (and free) grant-funded program that helps patients whose lives have recently been disrupted due to new or worsening health problems.
- We help these patients get their everyday lives back on track as quickly as possible—which usually means returning to their usual responsibilities at home and at work, whether with temporary adjustments or long-term accommodations.
- At the individual level, the goal of **RETAIN [State Name]** is to collaborate with physicians, like you, to minimize the impact of your patients’ medical problems on their future well-being—and to protect their livelihoods.
- Our big picture goal is to reduce job loss and withdrawal from the workforce in our state due to the needless prolonging of time away from work.
- We are currently seeking referrals from treating physicians who are willing to collaborate with us to help their patients get back to work as soon as medically feasible.
- **RETAIN [State Name]** offers our services as a trusted intermediary to treating physicians and their patients and to their employer and/or insurer.
- A few important points about our program:
  - It is voluntary for physicians, their patients, their employers, and any other involved party, such as an insurer. We presume each party has an interest in helping workers get everyday life back on track—which includes doing their jobs. The cost of our services is covered by a government grant called RETAIN, which stands for Retaining Employment and Talent After Injury/Illness Network.
  - We focus on outcomes. The success (and continued funding) of our program depends on earning the trust of and producing satisfactory results for employers, workers, and their treating physicians. So, we are very focused on helping you achieve results.

*Note: See the sample [scripts](#) in the ROC for more messaging related to program specifics, benefits for treating physicians, etc.*

### **SAW/RTW – General Background**

Below is some generic language about SAW/RTW and why it is such an important issue. Feel free to adapt it for use in written materials, speeches, trainings, media interviews, and more as you spread the word about your efforts to broader audiences.

- SAW/RTW is an important dimension of disability employment—one that is critical to help increase participation and retention in the labor force.
- We need to ensure people who become ill or injured can SAW or RTW when they are medically able—and the solution is coordinated, early action.
- When life-changing circumstances affect one’s ability to work, everyone has a role to play in helping that person stay in the labor force—from individuals themselves to employers to health care and employment services professionals.

- When employees leave the labor force, there's a ripple effect. For workers, there can be negative effects on many aspects of their lives. Work is a strong social determinant of health. Workers who leave the workforce are at increased risk of
  - Social isolation, stress, and loss of identity;
  - Deterioration in physical health and mental well-being, including new problems such as substance abuse, anxiety, and depression;
  - Loss of income, serious financial problems, and eventually a life of poverty;
  - Marital and family stress, separation, and divorce; and
  - Suicide, particularly among young men.
- When workers leave a job for health reasons, local employers are faced with the disruption of operations and the loss of valuable employees, often resulting in forfeited revenue and increased costs.
- In addition, local communities and economies face reductions in the tax base, decreased economic activity, and increased demand for taxpayer-funded disability benefits.

On multiple levels, it makes sense to keep employees working when medically feasible through collaborative SAW/RTW strategies. Such strategies lead to faster, better health care outcomes *and* better economic outcomes.

**Final Tip:** The [ODEP RETAIN website](#) features numerous [reports, statistics, and publications](#) that you may find helpful.

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*Remember to contact your RETAIN TA state liaison at [RETAINTA@air.org](mailto:RETAINTA@air.org) with your communications-related TA requests and questions about this toolkit. We look forward to working with you!*

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