



News You Can Use from the RETAIN Demonstration Project

January 2019

About This Newsletter

Welcome to the premier issue of *The RETAIN Report*—the internal e-newsletter for awardees of the Retaining Employment and Talent After Injury/Illness Network (RETAIN) Demonstration Project. Provided by the RETAIN Technical Assistance (TA) team, this bimonthly communication is designed to foster knowledge-sharing among the RETAIN state teams, with the help of the RETAIN TA team, independent evaluator, and federal program leaders.

Each issue will feature a series of project updates, resource spotlights, key dates and milestones, and more. Please feel free to share this [subscription link](#) with other team members as appropriate.

Thank you for reading and contributing! In coming issues, we look forward to using this space to feature news from your RETAIN teams as your pilots evolve.

Project Updates



Welcome to RETAIN

A Message from Jennifer Sheehy, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor for Disability Employment Policy

On behalf of all of us in the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), congratulations on joining the RETAIN Demonstration Project. We're delighted to welcome your state teams to this important program designed to test the impact of early intervention strategies on stay-at-work/return-to-work (SAW/RTW) outcomes.

SAW/RTW strategies are a priority for the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) because such strategies are critical to helping meet our nation's workforce needs and to moving the needle on disability employment. As you well know, when someone leaves the labor force because they become sick or have an accident, it can be detrimental—for them, for their families, for their employers, and for their local economies. Thousands of Americans who acquire disabilities are at risk of permanent unemployment and poverty, unless they get the supports and services they need. We believe the solution is coordinated early action, and that everyone has a role to play in supporting one's return to work when feasible.

You and your fellow state awardees are poised to help us make real progress through your RETAIN demonstration projects. We were impressed by your grant proposals targeting individuals, employers, and healthcare professionals, and while we know the work ahead will be challenging, we believe we have the right players assembled to effect lasting change. We look forward to working together so that all of you succeed and can help our labor force retain its greatest asset—its workers.

Meet the Federal RETAIN Team



The RETAIN team in ODEP would like to echo those welcoming remarks. It's been a pleasure helping you kick off your demonstration projects, and we can't wait to follow your efforts and results. The photos above may help you put faces to the voices you've been hearing on our program calls. Clockwise from the upper left, the individuals pictured are Chris McLaren, Kirk Lew, Melissa Turner, Margaret Jemmott, Meredith DeDona, Savi Swick, David Rosenblum, Nadia Mossburg, Sheldon Serkin, and Andy Arias.

As you know, RETAIN is led by ODEP in collaboration with DOL's Employment & Training Administration (ETA) and the Social Security Administration (SSA). We look forward to introducing you to our ETA and SSA colleagues in future issues of this newsletter.



Meet Your TA Team

A Message from GeMar Neloms, RETAIN TA Project Director

Greetings! I'm tremendously excited to serve as the RETAIN Technical Assistance (TA) project director, and I look forward to leveraging our American Institutes for Research (AIR) resources to support your efforts. Established in 1946, AIR is one of the world's largest behavioral and social science research and evaluation organizations. For more than 35 years, we have led numerous federal TA centers and projects on topics including disability, education, health, and workforce policy, practice, and systems change. Supporting us is Concepts, Inc., a small, woman-owned communications agency with niche experience in disability and employment issues. Together, we offer a complementary team with expertise in training, communications and outreach, and data systems review and support.

We look forward to assisting your teams over the next few months as you ramp up your efforts.



Getting to Know the State Awardees

Curious about the projects of your fellow RETAIN awardees? ODEP has awarded grants to eight state workforce agencies in Phase 1, and each of them has prepared an updated abstract outlining the

focus of their work. You can read the abstracts on [ODEP's RETAIN webpage](#).

The eight 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
- Washington Employment Security Department

A Look Ahead: What to Expect in Coming Months

The RETAIN TA team is working to provide you with the tools, resources, and assistance you need to succeed. Here's a look at what we'll be bringing you in the weeks ahead:

- The **RETAIN TA Virtual Online Community** that will launch in early February. This web-based tool will foster knowledge sharing between and among RETAIN awardees, subject matter experts, and other stakeholders. Features will include a SAW/RTW resource library and opportunities for online information exchanges between awardees.
- A **Communication Roadmap for RETAIN Awardees** designed to guide your team through a strategic communications planning exercise. The tool will help you consider how and where to infuse effective marketing and communications into your pilot activities.
- A **RETAIN TA webinar series** based on common themes that emerged during the state needs assessment calls. The series will explore early intervention models, project components, potential barriers, best practices, and more. (See upcoming webinars below.)

Never hesitate to reach out to us with your questions and requests by emailing RETAINTA@air.org.



The “Working Works” PSA

Have you seen the Campaign for Disability Employment's (CDE) latest public service announcement (PSA)? “[Working Works](#)” addresses the importance of early and collaborative SAW/RTW practices between individuals, employers, and healthcare professionals. It features baseball great Cal Ripken, Jr. and three others who “stayed in the game” or returned to work following injury or illness. The PSA will air on TV stations nationwide in coming months. In the meantime, you can use it as a tool to spark important discussions among your stakeholders.

Access the
Working Works
PSA

CSG’s Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work Toolkit

Be sure to check out the Council of State Governments’ [Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work Toolkit](#)—a new resource to help state officials



increase the employment retention and labor force participation of individuals who acquire and/or are at risk of developing work disabilities, whether on-the-job or off-the-job. Designed for state policymakers, it identifies challenges, actionable policy options, best practices, and implementation strategies to facilitate positive SAW/RTW outcomes. The Toolkit was developed by CSG in collaboration with ODEP's State Exchange on Employment & Disability (SEED).

[Access the Toolkit](#)



Mark Your Calendar

Join us for these upcoming technical assistance webinars:

An Overview: Models of Stay at Work and Return to Work

January 23, 2019

4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. ET

Register at: [SurveyMonkey.com/r/012319](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/012319)

Follow the Roadmap: How Communications Can Enhance Your RETAIN Demonstration Project

January 29, 2019

3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. ET

Register at: [SurveyMonkey.com/r/012919](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/012919)

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