

Ohio RETAIN Combines Care and Support to Help Housekeeper Return to Work

May 2023 RETAIN Success Story

Ohio RETAIN stepped in to provide supportive services to Teresa, a housekeeper who lost her job following knee surgery. These services gave Teresa time to fully heal, find a better job, and enjoy an improved quality of life. Teresa said:


“My life has improved 100% with having RETAIN as a tool for success in recovery.”

BACKGROUND


Some Ohio RETAIN participants are in a difficult place—they’re unable to work but do not qualify for social services. Ohio RETAIN social workers see participants who are injured outside of work and ineligible for short-term disability (STD). Even if some participants qualify for STD, the payments may not cover their bills and can be delayed at times. Participants’ documented income before their injuries can disqualify them from necessities such as cash assistance, food benefits, or other government-funded resources. Yet these needs persist as long as they are unable to work. As a result, participants may have to return to work before being physically ready or stay off the job longer than necessary to qualify for low-income benefits. Teresa, who was fifty-eight, faced this dilemma.

CHALLENGE

Teresa worked as a housekeeper in a nursing home, cleaning rooms, changing linens, and emptying bins. Knee pain affected her ability to work. “My knee was bone-on-bone and caused a lot of pain. I did rehab multiple times and received injections for my knee until I just couldn’t take it anymore,” Teresa said. Her employer wanted her to wait for surgery, but due to her other physical ailments, Teresa had the surgery sooner. Her employer had approved two weeks of STD benefits but then dismissed her. “Afterward, it was a months-long process to gather all the background information from



Challenge-Action-Results



Challenge: Teresa, an Ohio RETAIN participant, experienced health issues and financial challenges when she lost her job after having knee surgery.

Action: Ohio RETAIN provided Teresa with access to financial, social, physical, and behavioral health assistance to fill the gap of lost job benefits.

Results: With the help of supportive services provided by RETAIN, Teresa was able to properly heal from her surgery, find a new job, and spend more quality time with her grandchildren.

doctors about medications and anything that had to do with the knee surgery. [STD benefit staff] wanted to know about the rehab and anything else pertaining to it. Mentally, it was starting to affect me every day. It had a huge impact on my lifestyle.”

A doctor working with Ohio RETAIN referred Teresa to the program. She agreed to participate and met with her social worker, Kara.

ACTIONS

Arranged for financial support. Ohio RETAIN offers different kinds of financial assistance through supportive services. This may include assistance with childcare and utility bills, bus passes, job training materials, and work-related clothing like uniforms and work boots. To help Teresa, Kara conducted a needs assessment and determined that financial assistance and behavioral health resources would help Teresa the most. Kara wanted Teresa to heal properly without the stress of having to return to work too soon to meet her financial needs. Teresa was eligible for assistance from Ohio RETAIN, which provided funds to maintain Teresa’s car insurance, which proved to be critical for her job search.

Assisted with accessing behavioral health resources. After she lost her job, Teresa was anxious and worried about supporting herself. Kara provided behavioral health resources to Teresa during follow-up visits to help ease her anxiety about her new stressors. Teresa said, “My biggest help was Kara as a social worker helping me through all the things that I needed, giving me a peace of mind to not have to worry about having no income and figuring out how I was going to maintain everything. That was immeasurable to me, and Ohio RETAIN gave me all kinds of options such as counseling. I appreciated all the services that they had given me to utilize.”

Teresa said, “If I needed some help with my everyday problems as far as mentally, physically, or any of the above, I could call and ask for help and [Ohio RETAIN staff] were more than willing to give me the tools and did a very good job at it.”

After her recovery, Teresa found a new job on her own as a factory worker, which better suited her skills and abilities. Ohio RETAIN also provided money for gas during the first two weeks of her new job before she got her first paycheck. “I now walk without pain and have a wonderful job that I really like,” Teresa said. “The help that I received had a huge impact on me being able to keep going to therapy and not cutting it short to go back to work.”

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND RESULTS

Ohio RETAIN connects participants with financial assistance through supportive services that allow them to fully heal from an injury or illness and gain peace of mind before returning to work.

- Ohio RETAIN coordinated physical rehabilitation and offered resources for counseling to help Teresa recover from her knee surgery and lessen her anxiety over losing her job. Now she says, “I am looking forward to getting on a bicycle with my grandkids because I have the range of motion now that would not cause me pain.”
- Ohio RETAIN provided Teresa with financial support to bridge the gap between jobs so she could take time to heal.



Ohio is participating in RETAIN (Retaining Employment and Talent After Injury/Illness Network) to build connections and improve coordination among employers, health-care providers, and other key parties to help workers with new injuries or illness stay in the workforce. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS), in coordination with several partners, leads Ohio RETAIN. The US Department of Labor, in collaboration with the Social Security Administration, sponsors RETAIN.

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