

Kansas RETAIN Success Story (June 2022)

RETAINWORKS Integrated Approach Eases Access to Critical Services

When participants are ill or injured, they do not want to visit multiple state agencies to access the supports they need to get back to work. RETAINWORKS designed a return-to-work plan that gathers all this information in one place. The plan improves user experience, fosters accountability and communication among partners, and ensures that participants have access to all critical support services.

BACKGROUND


When an individual with an injury or illness is referred to RETAINWORKS, a key first step for the participant and RETAIN team is to develop a comprehensive return-to-work (RTW) plan together. The RTW plan identifies the health care and workforce services that the participant needs to return to work successfully. This can include health care referrals, risk assessments, rehabilitation, work adjustments, job search support, or retraining.

CHALLENGE

During the first phase of the program, RETAINWORKS found that some participants did not receive all the support services they needed. Participants might need reimbursement for transportation or childcare during doctor’s visits or job training. They may also need financial support to pay rent due to loss of income. However, many RETAINWORKS participants did not have an Individualized Employment Plan that the Kansas workforce system requires to access these support services.


ACTIONS

RETAINWORKS took steps to create a single RTW plan that meets workforce system requirements. RETAINWORKS believes this change creates a better experience for participants by facilitating their access to other supports they need to return to work. RETAINWORKS anticipates the single RTW plan will



Challenge-Action-Results

Challenge: Develop an integrated workplan to ensure access to all critical support services.



Action: RETAINWORKS created and trained partners on a new RTW plan that incorporated multi-system requirements and budgeted for increased incentives.

Results: The program has implemented an integrated RTW plan that provides access to all available support services and fosters accountability and communication among cross-system partners.

increase the number of participants who will successfully return to work. The RETAINWORKS team accomplished the following:

Participant-led process design that integrates medical and workforce systems.

Development of the initial RTW plan is a participant-led process that includes the RETAIN team’s medical and workforce system staff. The integrated RTW plan identifies the participant’s work and personal goals and expectations, clarifies RTW team and participant responsibilities, outlines the services provided, notes any barriers to completion, and includes a timeline. The RTW plan can be adjusted to include additional services or resources as needed. Nurse navigators follow up with participants and document milestones as they are achieved.

Anticipated and managed budget changes for more workforce-funded services.

RETAINWORKS participants receive financial incentives for completing key milestones, including the RTW plan. RETAINWORKS increased the budget for this activity to account for more participants completing this step.



Gathered feedback and trained RETAINWORKS partners.

RETAINWORKS trains new health care and workforce partners to develop and implement RTW plans during in-person partner trainings. Partners have embraced the new process for RTW plans. In addition, RETAINWORKS regularly leads local implementation team meetings with health care and workforce system staff to promote collaboration and problem-solving. The program currently manages eight local teams. More teams will be added as the program expands.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND RESULTS

By developing an integrated RTW plan, RETAINWORKS is doing the following:

- ✓ *Creating a better user experience for RETAINWORKS participants by eliminating barriers to critical services.*

By aligning RTW plans with workforce and health care system requirements, participants no longer have to navigate multiple state agencies to obtain the health care and workforce supports they need.

This alignment increases participants’ access to workforce-funded supports and nurse navigators’ awareness of crucial resources.

- ✓ *Fostering communication, collaboration, and accountability among partners and participants.*

Nurse navigators contact RETAINWORKS participants within 3 days of enrollment to help them complete their RTW plan. By completing the plan as a first step, the RTW team can identify support services earlier in the process.

Nurse navigators monitor participation and modify the RTW plan with participants as needed.



RETAIN WORKS

Kansas 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 newly injured and ill workers stay in the workforce. The Kansas Department of Commerce leads RETAINWORKS in coordination with several partners. The U.S. Department of Labor, in collaboration with the Social Security Administration, sponsors RETAIN.

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