

Community of Practice – “Live” Notes

### Topic: Where Do We “Grow” From Here?

### SME: Tonia Peterson, MA, LPC, CRC, OTR/L

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A “Welcome to RETAIN TA session” and introductions by RETAIN Participants started off the session. The first discussion question of the CoP was:

**What’s Your Definition of Success?**

# RETAIN participants responded to the question as follows:

* One participant answered, ‘improvement of life.’ Another participant stated, ‘a sustainable program with processes that makes sense.’ A third participant shared, ‘successfully providing supports to individuals to help them return to work.’ One participant stated that she felt it is important for RETAIN participants to feel fulfilled and being able to get them on the path they need to be on, even if that does not mean return to work. Another participant shared that she believes success is dependent on the individual person and how the idea of success can change over time. This same participant also stated that confidence plays a role is success as well.
* RETAIN SME, Tonia Peterson shared that she was glad participants shared their responses and that she chose today’s topic because success is like planting seeds. For some, success may be like tulips where you see results more quickly, where for others it is more like trees and may take a while.

The second discussion question of the CoP was:

**How Would You Define Your Role?**

# RETAIN participants responded to the question as follows:

* One participant answered that she was responsible for collecting all the data then communicating it in a way that tells a story, especially for legislators, the public, and the higher ups in state administration. She said it is important for the story to get told in the way it needs to be told. Another participant stated that she was the recruiter for all the patient providers and employers, and a motivator in terms of keeping the team going to reach their target population. She also said she needs to be able to explain to patients what their role in the study will be as well as educate the providers and the employers that are going to be participating. A third participant shared that their team helps motivate each other and that they are all different pieces of a puzzle. Her team is composed of individuals with different disciplines and rely on each other to find answers to different problems. She said by reaching out to one another, and by having the confidence to say I do not have the answers, it helps her team grow and to learn from the people around them. Another participant shared that he works on the employer side of things. He said does not feel like he needs to know everything, but rather knowing enough to help define the role of those involved in the study.
* RETAIN SME, Tonia Peterson shared that a lot of these roles seem to require a translation of information and that is important to know when there is a missing piece in that translation and being able to identify that missing piece and bring it your team to keep things moving.

RETAIN SME, Tonia Peterson then shared she once had a case that ended up different from her expectations, but nevertheless learned a lot from it. She asked participants to share their own experience with SAW/RTW cases that ended up differently than expected, but good learning experiences.

**Case Sharing: What Have You Learned?**

# RETAIN participants shared the following:

* One participant shared a case in which a correctional officer, with history of anger issues, worked at a supermax prison. This correctional officer had a hard time with other co-workers due to the stressful work environment. This correctional officer really wanted to be a police officer, which was unrealistic given the individual’s anger issues. After months of job searches, the individual found a new position at a minimum-security prison, which had a less stressful work environment, making it a better fit. The position at the minimum-security prison also came with a comparable wage. The participant stated she was surprised that the individual still wanted to be a correctional officer after all the talk about wanting to be a police officer, but was happy with the way it turned out. In addition, the participant stated having those tough conversation about what a worker may or may not be cut out for is an important skill.

# RETAIN SME, Tonia Peterson: What Did I Learn that Affects How I look at SAW/RTW Cases?

* RETAIN SME, Tonia Peterson then shared another case in which a manager with a history of MSK and migraines was allowed to RTW without proper evaluation from the supervisor and the return-to-work coordinator. Upon returning to work, the manager received an ergonomic chair, but needed further accommodations. Tonia worked hard on this case to get the individual what they needed to be successful at work, but the manager repeatedly stated she did not need anything other than the ergonomic chair. This is when Tonia realized she cannot work harder than the person she is trying to help.
* Tonia stated that some people are resistant to change and do not want to change where others are stuck and know they need to change, but do not know how to. The customers who know they need to change are the ones participants will likely be spending most of their time with, and the ones in which participants can make the most impact.

# Key Takeaways

* One participant stated today’s CoP was very thought provoking, especially the comment about how you cannot work harder than the individual you are trying to help.
* Another stated she definitely believes there is a balance to working hard and listening and learning from the ones you are trying to help.
* Several other participants noted that they found the conversation to be enlightening and that it was great to hear case studies from other states.