

## State Director CoP—Notes

**Facilitators: Derek Shields and Leslie Dawson**

### **Session 3: Engagement**

**August 2, 2022**

The third State Directors CoP (community of practice) session kicked off with a brief welcome from the American Institutes for Research® (AIR®), reminding everyone how to participate in the session. They introduced the facilitators who welcomed participants and recapped the purpose of the State Directors CoP as an open discussion among participants. The facilitators presented the topic of session, engagement; spoke about defining engagement with the group; and provided an overview of the agenda.

### **Defining Engagement**

The facilitator asked, “What does engagement look like to the states?” Their responses follow.

- One state mentioned that engagement pertains to partnering agency engagement, medical systems, and workforce development boards. Also, the state department of administration (personnel director for the state) will roll out to all state employees and departments.
- One participant said that engagement means not working in silos and everyone working together toward the same goal.
- One participant made an intentional decision to have outreach to engage certain groups. There are two academic healthcare systems in the state that have helped create positive provider engagement. They found success in creating avenues for connection with employers and providers.

“How are we engaging with employers, participants, and providers?” “Who are other populations that we engage with (system change partners, other stakeholders)?” The facilitator stated that these questions will be discussed throughout the CoP session.

### **Engagement With Participants**

The group moved into breakout rooms to discuss engagement for RETAIN participants. Participants were asked to consider the following questions:

- What has been a positive experience?
- What has been a negative experience?
- What value do you provide the employee?

Participants from the two breakouts reported back to the larger group. Their responses follow.

### ***Positive Experiences***

- Positive participant experiences included that one barrier is child care and transportation in a rural community, and now participants are getting that type of benefit.
- The return-to-work case managers have the ability to directly call participants back. This helps build relationships and get questions answered quickly.

### ***Negative Experiences***

- Time constraints can limit out-in-the-community conversations. It is challenging to make meaningful connections when you have only 30 seconds to speak with an individual about RETAIN.
- Individuals also may receive federal government or state benefits and don't want to lose those.
- Many participants don't want the state to contact their employers. They don't want their job negatively impacted, so they may hesitate to participate.

### ***Suggestions for Fostering Engagement***

Participants provided the following suggestions on fostering participant engagement, based on what has worked well for their states so far.

- One state has had success using a QR code to connect participants to information and intake coordinators during brief initial connections.
- Make direct connections to participants themselves. States have found success engaging in community events (e.g., state fairs, health fairs, job fairs, twilight market for health care associates) to meet with eligible participants. There also is positive relationship building with employers at these events.
- The facilitator asked about addressing trust building with participants. Building trust with potential participants about the validity and benefits of RETAIN is crucial.

### ***Engagement With Employers***

The facilitator asked the participants to share the following regarding employers:

- What has been a positive experience?
- What has been a negative experience?
- If you had a crystal ball, what would you like to know?
- What value to you bring to the table?

## ***Participant Responses***

- One state created a functional position description for employers' return-to-work coordinators, which is helpful when employers are at maximum capacity. This takes the heavy lift off the employer to develop this type of position, and employers can use this description when/if hiring and budgets allow.
- Summer is a challenging time to connect with employers. For example, many are juggling staff vacations and kids out of school, so they are being pulled in many directions.
- Many employers are still overwhelmed because of COVID-19, which continues to impact staffing across the states.
- One participant stated that they shared resources about employer mental health to try to engage employers.
- One state had a lot of contact with local and regional Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) regional groups. As the state opens enrollment in new regions, they should see positive outcomes from these contacts.
- One participant mentioned creating an employer champion task force to help increase employer engagement.

## **Engagement With Health Care Providers**

As part of the discussion topic on health care providers, a poll was shared with the group. "Rank your current level of engagement with your health care providers on a scale of 1 to 5." The poll was launched, and the answers were as follows:

- 1: They are large and in charge: 10%.
- 2: They engage in their own timing: 70%.
- 3: Equality at its finest: 0%.
- 4: We lead, they follow: 20%.
- 5: We own/are the health care provider: 0%.

The facilitator asked, "How is engagement with health care providers working for the states?" The responses were as follows:

- One participant said that they're challenged with health care providers being in the office during the summer months.
- The providers' priority has to be patients first, and they may not be on the same schedule as the states, which are trying to share information about RETAIN.

- The facilitator asked if states reach out to academic-based health providers to teach about return to work. Two states have programs that target education of new resident providers so that they are informed about RETAIN at the student/resident level.
- Educating providers about RETAIN takes a lot of time. One state mentioned directly targeting office administrative staff because those staff members are likely the ones completing return-to-work requests.
- One state's program is based on targeting/educating primary care providers first and then directly targeting participants/employers secondarily. For this state, provider outreach and engagement are their top priorities at this time.

## Engagement With Other Stakeholders

The group briefly discussed how they are engaging with other stakeholders. The facilitator posted the following questions:

- Who are your other stakeholders?
- What do you need from them?
- How do you get them to engage?

The responses from the participants were as follows:

- One participant shared that partnering with workforce training has created some great success stories. The state connects participants to new job training when they no longer can do their previous job because of an injury and provided an example of a man who was a roofer prior to his injury but could no longer do that job. He was trained and is working as a truck driver, making a comparable if not better salary. This approach has been helpful to many participants in the state who have found equal or better jobs.
- The facilitator pointed out that success stories about retraining/reskilling employees help in broader program engagement.
- Community members, especially for populations of color and indigenous communities, are important partners to engage with.
  - For one state, community-based organizations are engaged through a community advisory board to promote RETAIN. This helps facilitate true equity and ensure that communities of color receive services at the same rate as White residents.
  - To track these numbers, the state looks at benchmarks built into the program. The state monitors a population dashboard to ensure that at least 15% of RETAIN participants are members of communities of color and indigenous communities.

## Closeout

- The facilitator reiterated engagement resources on the ROC and encouraged participants to use these resources.
- The Bizzell Group is available to assist with state communications.
- Office hours are available for Leslie and Derek on August 23, 24, and 26. AIR posted the sign-up link in the chat and will send the link by email as well.
- The RETAIN annual convening will be September 21–22, 2022, and details will be sent to the states later this week.