



# Stay at Work/Return to Work (SAW/RTW) Models and Strategies: Synthesis of SAW/RTW Programs, Efforts, Models, and Definitions

## SUMMARY

In 2017, the Chief Evaluation Office and the Office of Disability Employment Policy partnered with independent contractor Abt Associates to conduct the [Stay at Work/Return to Work \(SAW/RTW\) Models and Strategies Study](#). The study aims to document and expand the knowledge base of SAW/RTW strategies and identify promising models and best practices. The final study also includes evaluation design options, which could be implemented to build on and add to the evidence produced.

SAW/RTW programs intend to help a worker who experiences an illness or injury to remain at work, or if the worker has left the labor force, to return as soon as medically possible. **Stay at Work/Return to Work (SAW/RTW) Models and Strategies: Synthesis of SAW/RTW Programs, Efforts, Models, and Definitions** describes programs that were operating in the U.S. in 2018.

This Department of Labor-funded study includes four reports and a summary of findings and was a result of the annual learning agenda process. It contributes to the labor evidence-base to inform employment and training programs and policies and addresses Department strategic goals and priorities.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **A little more than half of programs (39 out of 68, or 57 percent) incorporated more than one of the five service components.** Nearly every intervention (64 out of 68) included either an employer-provided accommodation, financial incentive, or information component, but most of those (38 out of 64, or 59 percent) included only one of the three components.
- **A majority (60 percent) of SAW/RTW interventions that were identified include some form of an information-based component** (i.e., technical assistance, case management, or case coordination).
- **The approach taken by most workers' compensation agencies involves incentivizing employers to hire or retain a worker with a disability** through a job accommodation or transitional/alternative work arrangement.
- While SAW/RTW programs often engage with workers' attending physicians to obtain approval for accommodation plans, **the review identified relatively few interventions that prioritize ongoing and substantial engagement with health care providers.**
- Most efforts to develop best preparatory practices for implementation of SAW/RTW services **approach the issue from the perspective of the employer.**

[SEE FULL REPORT](#)





# Stay at Work/Return to Work (SAW/RTW) Models and Strategies: Synthesis of SAW/RTW Programs, Efforts, Models, and Definitions

**TIMEFRAME:** 2017-2020

**SUBMITTED BY:** Abt Associates

**DATE PREPARED:** October 2020

**PARTNER AGENCY:** Office of Disability Employment Policy

**SPONSOR:** DOL Chief Evaluation Office

**CEO CONTACT:** [ChiefEvaluationOffice@dol.gov](mailto:ChiefEvaluationOffice@dol.gov)

*The Department of Labor (DOL) Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) sponsors independent evaluations and research, primarily conducted by external, third-party contractors in accordance with the [Department of Labor Evaluation Policy](#). CEO's research development process includes extensive technical review at the design, data collection and analysis stage, including: external contractor review and OMB review and approval of data collection methods and instruments per the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA), review by academic peers (e.g., Technical Working Groups), and inputs from relevant DOL agency and program officials and CEO technical staff. Final reports undergo an additional independent expert technical review and a review for Section 508 compliance prior to publication. The resulting reports represent findings from this independent research and do not represent DOL positions or policies.*

