



Abstract

Lead Applicant: Kansas Department of Commerce

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Project Title: RETAIN Kansas

Geographic Area: Butler County, Kansas

Funding Requested: \$ 1,877,823

The Kansas Department of Commerce, in partnership with Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, and the Susan B. Allen (SBA) Hospital System in Butler County, has been awarded nearly \$1.88 Million for a Phase I planning grant from the US Department of Labor.

The project design will address the current disability culture in health care delivery systems, employment services systems and places of work by establishing a coordinated set of practices in each system to focus on the continual employment of individuals who suffer a potentially debilitating illness or injury.

The Health Care System partner, SBA, will hire two fulltime Return to Work Navigators to coordinate health care service delivery among medical personnel within and outside of SBA. Additionally, the Navigator will act as the liaison between the health care system and the public workforce system. SBA will also develop and deliver comprehensive SAW/RTW training for physicians, Nurse Practitioners and other medical personnel to prepare their staff to utilize holistic, coordinated care principles. Physicians and Nurse Practitioners will participate in 16 hours of training encompassing the full range of occupational and other rehabilitative health best practices, pain management, patient expectations, documenting patient progress, comprehensive follow-up and enhanced patient communication, among other topics. The purpose of the training is to establish the culture of health care delivery to include

what happens to the patient after the initial health care service is delivered and how the medical system can make a positive impact on these real-world patient outcomes.

RETAIN Kansas will fund two professional staff in the local American Job Center. The Medical and Workforce Systems Coordinator will assure the participant receives early information regarding workforce services and understands procedures and timelines for receiving those services. Additionally, this staff person will serve as a primary point of contact for participants and the health systems, identify workers who access AJC services who have been injured or are ill to the extent employment is or may be diminished, describe program activities, expectations of participants, eligibility and assist with service enrollment. This professional will also assist with reporting grant activities and outcomes.

The second position located at the local workforce development AJC will serve as a primary point of contact for employers, ensuring worksite accommodations, preparation for and/or understanding of medical restrictions and determining retraining needs, including perhaps On-the-Job training, for new duties. The Employer Coordinator will also assist with reporting employee progress, grant activities and outcomes, and documenting workplace activities. The Employer Coordinator will also regularly document and communicate participant progress to the Medical and Employment Systems Coordinator to track all interventions the participant receives. Finally, the Employer Coordinator will train employers on their accommodation responsibilities and community resources to assist with their obligations.

Based on the supporting data, Kansas Department of Commerce and its partners will primarily target workers at risk of work loss due to musculoskeletal injuries or illnesses and mental disorders. Individuals suffering other injuries or illnesses that could lead an individual to seek disability determination and benefits, such as traumatic brain injury or congestive heart failure, may be served as well but will not be the focus of this project.

The volume of patients seen by this medical system, along with supporting data regarding workplace injuries and worker's compensation, indicate RETAIN Kansas will be able to recruit participants from a pool of over 4000 during the period of performance. It is estimated the sample size of 390 individuals will be identified as appropriate for RTW/SAW interventions during the Pilot Demonstration phase of the project.

Butler County and SBA provide a medical system large enough to provide a significant pool of patients but small enough to work through any problems or system breakdowns which occur. Further, its location to the state's largest city will lend credibility to replication of the model in major metropolitan areas. Commerce plans to deliver the pilot for a full year.