



RETAIN | Retaining Employment and Talent After Injury/Illness Network

Phase 1 Interim Summary – Kentucky

The Phase 1 Interim Summaries were completed in January 2021.

RETAIN Kentucky supports workers to stay at work (SAW) or return to work (RTW) after injury or illness by creating mutually beneficial partnerships between health care providers, employers, and workforce systems. They have enlisted credible health care champions to help others clearly recognize the value of RETAIN Kentucky and implemented universal design principles to support employers’ retention strategies.

Program Description

Partners. The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation leads RETAIN Kentucky. Their key partners are:

- Coalition for Workforce Diversity
- Frazier Rehabilitation Institute, University of Louisville Division of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation
- Kent State University
- Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet
- Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services
- Kentucky Department for Public Health
- Kentucky Division for Disability Determination Services
- Kentucky Hospital Association
- Kentucky Labor Cabinet
- Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board

- KentuckianaWorks Regional Workforce Development Board
- The Council of State Governments
- University of Kentucky Human Development Institute

**RETAIN
KENTUCKY**

Kentucky is participating in the Retaining Employment and Talent After Injury/Illness Network (RETAIN), sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor in collaboration with the Social Security Administration. RETAIN states are building connections and improving coordination among employers, health care providers, and other key parties to help newly injured and ill workers stay in the workforce.

Target Population. Workers who have a non-work-related injury or illness and are not receiving coordinated services through the workers’ compensation system are eligible for RETAIN Kentucky services. During the initial stages of the pilot, participants were required to live or work in one of the following counties: Jefferson, Bullitt, Henry, Oldham, Shelby, Spencer, or Trimble. In summer 2020, the program expanded to include Bourbon, Clark, Fayette, Jessamine, Madison, Scott, and Woodford counties.

Service Coordination. RTW Coordinators conduct an individualized assessment of a participant’s work needs and then provide care coordination and case management to support these needs. For example, RTW coordinators support workers in navigating the health care system, social services systems, job accommodations, retraining, and rehabilitation services to promote RTW or SAW when a participant is healthy enough to resume their work

activity. Once a participant has successfully returned to work, their active involvement with RETAIN Kentucky is complete.

Program Successes

Implementation and Participant Successes. At its core, RETAIN Kentucky is skillful at supporting workers by building and expanding an influential and collaborative referral network including health care providers *and* business leaders. For the RETAIN Kentucky team, recruitment and enrollment success maps back to one key concept: *relationships*. By tapping into existing relationships with health care providers—and building new ones—the project assembled a winning network of partners who are embedding RETAIN referral practices, and a “return-to-work” mindset, into their everyday work.

Outreach and Program Milestones. RETAIN Kentucky forged important relationships with the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation faculty and residents at the University of Louisville. Those relationships alone brought them access to 700 multispecialty physicians, one of whom emerged as RETAIN Kentucky’s first “physician champion” who actively promotes RETAIN to other physicians. Employers are another crucial component to effective service coordination. The RETAIN Kentucky team secured participation from a major employer in the region, General Electric (GE) Appliances, during the pilot phase to refer eligible employees. Businesses such as GE benefit from RETAIN Kentucky’s coordinated supports including job site analysis, referrals for assistive technology, and support for job accommodations. Health care providers and employers alike recognize the value of RETAIN Kentucky as it fills a gap in supporting Kentuckians’ well-being. The ability to access comprehensive health and social care services while injured or ill reduces the negative impact on a person’s health and increases their financial security. The various engagement touchpoints helped build the program’s referral network and awareness of the importance of early intervention to help Kentuckians get better and back to work after injury or illness.

Program Challenges

Challenges. When stay-at-home orders were issued statewide in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the RETAIN team quickly adjusted their in-person support to participants, employers, and health care providers to more virtual-based services. Another challenge RETAIN Kentucky has faced is not meeting their projected participant enrollment targets.

Strategies to Address Challenges. When Kentucky shut down to prevent the spread of COVID-19, RETAIN Kentucky stepped up. Many businesses in Kentucky went fully remote when the pandemic started. RETAIN Kentucky worked with employers and employees to figure out what resources they needed to stay productive. RETAIN Kentucky made local connections for free or low-cost accessible technology tools to keep participating employees recovering from injury or illness efficient while working from home. In addition, the team provided guidance to employers for conducting accessible interviews online and tips for participants searching for work on how to “put their best foot forward” during an online interview.

Looking Ahead

By enlisting credible health care and business leaders as “champions” to join with and advocate for its program, RETAIN Kentucky is building and expanding an influential and collaborative referral network. Health care providers and employers are gaining a new appreciation of the reciprocal relationship between health and employment. These partners now recognize the value of SAW/RTW services to the workers they serve who have been ill or injured, an awareness that leads to better health and economic outcomes. In the next phase of RETAIN Kentucky, the team will continue to expand its network of health care providers and its geographic

catchment area. In addition, the team continues to conduct environmental scans to identify companies that are hiring, especially those with teleworking opportunities, to grow its base of employer partners.

Supporting people to stay at work or return to work requires a team approach. RETAIN Kentucky provides resources to injured or ill workers to navigate health, vocational, and social services.

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