



**RETAIN** | Retaining Employment  
and Talent After  
Injury/Illness Network

## Phase 1 Interim Summary – Minnesota

*The Phase 1 Interim Summaries were completed in January 2021.*

**RETAIN Minnesota** engaged a health care partner with prior experience implementing stay-at-work (SAW) and return-to-work (RTW) practices to develop and implement essential infrastructure and strategies. They engaged experienced care managers to conduct outreach to patients; enlisted clinicians in emergency departments, trauma, and other key clinical specialties to support recruitment and enrollment; partnered with workforce agencies to conduct employer outreach, engagement, and recruitment; and designed and implemented well-designed trainings for clinicians.

### Program Description

**Program Partners.** The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development leads the RETAIN Minnesota program. Their key partners are:

- Governor’s Workforce Development Board
- HealthForce Minnesota
- Mayo Clinic
- Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry
- Workforce Development, Inc. (WDI)

**Target Population.** Initially, RETAIN Minnesota recruited participants from Southeastern Minnesota who are patients of the Mayo Clinic and diagnosed with an acute musculoskeletal condition, especially back pain. In early 2020, RETAIN Minnesota expanded eligibility criteria to include Minnesota residents throughout the state with any injury or illness that affects employment. Plans are currently underway to recruit participants from additional Mayo Clinic Health System (MCHS) locations, including MCHS Mankato, MCHS Cannon Falls, MCHS Lake City, and Mayo Clinic Square.

**Service Coordination.** RETAIN Minnesota identifies participants by screening lists of patients seen in the emergency department, identifying patients who have completed Family and Medical Leave Act forms, and by reviewing provider appointment calendars from several departments, including orthopedics and trauma. RTW case managers (RTW CMs) operate out of the Mayo Clinic and coordinate with the participant’s employer and provider during the RTW process. The RTW CM shares recommendations or estimated RTW goals that are based on Official Disability Guidelines best practices with the provider, as needed. The RTW CM also coordinates with employers to determine whether workplace accommodations are feasible; and, if an employer indicates that the organization cannot accommodate a worker who needs modified duty, the RTW CMs work with WDI to identify an appropriate temporary reassignment. Participants receive incentives to enroll in and complete the program.



*Minnesota 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.*

## Program Successes

**Implementation and Participant Successes.** RETAIN Minnesota developed the operational infrastructure to successfully coordinate with health care providers, employers, and participants to facilitate RTW for at least 41 participants to their original employer and 2 with a new employer. Seven were referred to WDI. The Mayo team also established processes to screen electronic health records and clinic schedules for potential participants. All of the RETAIN partners collaborated with Healthforce MN to provide content for the RETAIN Minnesota website, which includes the provider and RTW CM trainings as online, self-directed learning modules. RETAIN Minnesota can easily track and monitor the medical and employment progress of participants using two data systems, Workforce One and Mayo Occupational Medicine Practice (OMP) software, used by RTW CMs for case management notes.

An Employer Outreach Specialist at WDI coordinates transitional work experiences to help people SAW when medical restrictions prevent them from returning to their regular jobs after injury or illness. Some participants are connected to a paid transitional work experience with another employer, enabling injured and ill workers to return to a regular work schedule, earn a paycheck, retain their skills, and in some cases build new ones. Further, the availability of transitional workers allows employers to fill key roles and accomplish necessary work.

**Outreach and Program Milestones.** RETAIN Minnesota partners collaborated to create employer outreach materials, including a RETAIN brochure and fact sheet, and to develop a social media campaign to increase program visibility. The Mayo team successfully engaged health care providers in several key departments, such as the emergency department and Orthopedic Spine Clinic, to facilitate screening patients for eligibility. In addition, WDI and other RETAIN Minnesota team members met with employers, including a small plastics manufacturer and an electronics manufacturer. WDI also collaborated with the Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce to hold a “Community Matters” event titled “Creative Solutions to Hire, Retain, & Develop Employees,” during which they provided information about RETAIN.

## Program Challenges

**Challenges.** RETAIN Minnesota’s primary challenge was lower than anticipated program enrollment, despite their efforts to screen thousands of health records to identify potentially eligible participants. Compounding their existing enrollment challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic caused the Mayo Clinic to cease all non-essential activities for approximately three months, including the RETAIN program.

**Strategies to Address Challenges.** RETAIN Minnesota implemented several strategies aimed at addressing the participant enrollment challenges. First, the project expanded participant eligibility criteria from Southeastern Minnesota to include people who work throughout Minnesota and to include any injury or illness that affects employment, rather than solely focusing on workers with musculoskeletal conditions. Since implementing the expanded eligibility criteria, enrollment has been increasing. Second, RETAIN Minnesota added participant incentives—\$50 for enrollment and \$50 for completion of the program. Third, the program began implementing telemedicine and video-messaging to augment participation during the pandemic.

## Looking Ahead

Minnesota plans to enhance their RETAIN program in the future by expanding eligibility throughout the state and to any injury or illness that affects employment. They are also working to expand use of telehealth strategies to enhance convenience and access to services as well as developing plans to create a RETAIN component within Minnesota’s Workforce One web-based client management system that serves the state. This data system will support data management as the program expands. Because of RETAIN, a successful SAW/RTW

program that was previously available exclusively to Mayo Clinic employees has expanded to a statewide initiative, with sustained involvement of employers as well as workers who support and actively participate in SAW and RTW activities for injured and ill Minnesotan workers.

*RETAIN Minnesota engaged academic teaching and learning experts to create professional and accessible online training programs for clinicians using storyboarding, case examples, and input from clinical experts to enhance credibility.*

[www.mnretain.com](http://www.mnretain.com)