



Stay at Work/Return to Work Models and Strategy Study: Synthesis of Evidence about SAW/RTW and Related Programs

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 Models and Strategy Study: Synthesis of Evidence about SAW/RTW and Related Programs** includes a review of evidence published between 2008 and 2018 on the effects of SAW/RTW or related programs on employment and the receipt of federal disability benefits.

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

- The results of the meta-analytic regression suggest that the **higher-quality evidence shows larger impacts for program models that include employment services, such as the Individual Placement and Support model.**
- The review of systematic reviews indicates that **program models have generally positive results for individuals with musculoskeletal conditions, including low back pain**, and some models show positive results for individuals with mental illness.
- The available evidence on SAW/RTW programs tends to be low-quality, and findings from high-quality studies are difficult to interpret.
- In general, **studies with larger sample sizes have greater statistical power and can conclude with high confidence that estimated impacts fall within a narrow range.**
- The results of the meta-analytic review of all individual studies finds **few stable patterns in how impacts vary with disability type or program model.**

[SEE FULL REPORT](#)





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PARTNER AGENCY: Office of Disability Employment Policy

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