

RETAIN KENTUCKY

Retaining
Employment
and Talent After
Injury/Illness
Network

When people leave the labor force because they become sick or have an injury, it can be detrimental—for them, their families, employers and the economy. An individual’s quality of life can be negatively impacted by health conditions and financial problems. Employers incur unexpected expenses due to the loss of a valuable employee; and governments at all levels face reductions in the tax base, costly payouts of disability benefits and decreased economic activity.

Kentucky is proud to be participating in an initiative designed to address these issues—the *RETAIN Demonstration Project*, which is a collaborative effort led by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy in partnership with the Employment and Training Administration and the Social Security Administration. Through RETAIN, eight state teams are implementing and evaluating early intervention strategies designed to help injured or ill employees remain in or return to their jobs.

About RETAIN Kentucky

The Kentucky Department of Workforce Investment together with the University of Kentucky Human Development Institute and committed project partners are leading Kentucky’s RETAIN Demonstration Project. This collaborative effort is known as the *RETAINing Kentucky’s Workforce through Universal Design* project.

Building on state efforts including Kentucky Work Matters, Employment First, and the Call to Action to Meet Commonwealth Workforce Needs, RETAIN Kentucky will use peer support, assistive technology and universal design to promote quality, coordinated health and employment-related stay-at-work/return-to-work (SAW/RTW) services. RETAIN Kentucky service coordinators will work directly with employers to assess the impact of SAW/RTW activities and help workers facing illness or injury remain in or return to the workforce.

National Data

Each year, millions of American workers leave the workforce after experiencing an injury or illness. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration estimates that four million nonfatal work-related injuries and illnesses occur annually, and the National Safety Council estimates that there were over 14 million nonfatal, off-the-job injuries and illnesses in 2014 alone. Some experts estimate that non-occupational injuries and illnesses are roughly eight times as common as occupational ones. Hundreds of thousands of these workers go on to receive state or federal disability benefits. The impacts on individuals, employers and all levels of government can be significant and long-lasting.

Many injured workers could remain in their jobs or the workforce if they received timely, effective assistance to navigate SAW/RTW services. In fact, data show that with modest assistance, more than 120,000 employees could have returned to work but did not (Bardos, Benrak, Ben-Shalom, 2015).

The RETAIN Kentucky Approach

The RETAIN Kentucky project will target a specific population of individuals facing illness or injury and provide those individuals with SAW/RTW supports and strategies.

Employee participants will include:

- Workers experiencing musculoskeletal injury or illness that is not work-related. An emphasis will be placed on workers with substance use disorders that are co-existing or that develop after the injury or illness.
- Workers currently in the labor force or seeking employment.
- Workers who have not applied for or currently receiving federal disability benefits.

In service to those individuals and their employers, the RETAIN Kentucky team will:

- Provide immediate support and assistance to maximize the likelihood of the employee staying at work or returning as quickly as possible.
- Create partnerships to implement systems changes to start employment and health care services immediately after injury or illness.
- Implement SAW/RTW strategies across health, employment and public health to better identify individuals as they experience a medical condition that impacts their ability to keep working.
- Incorporate early intervention strategies, peer supports and training of health care and employers to assist workers with injuries or illness in maintaining a connection to the labor force.

RETAIN Kentucky Service Area

The KentuckianaWorks region, which includes the Louisville metro area and Bullitt, Henry, Oldham, Shelby, Spencer and Trimble counties, is the service area for the pilot phase of this project.

According to the 2017 KentuckianaWorks Local Plan, the region's unemployment rate is the lowest it has been in a decade, and the size of the labor force has grown to its highest levels since at least 1990. However, employment rates and labor force participation rates in the Louisville area are not uniform across all demographic groups. Teenagers have the highest unemployment rates, followed by people with disabilities, people with less than a high school diploma, and African Americans. For people with disabilities, the labor force participation rate is 37 percent and the unemployment rate is 11.2 percent.

Why Should Employers Participate?

For employers navigating the complexity and cost of worker injury and illness, participation in the RETAIN Kentucky project will enable you to:

- Keep the employee on the job or get them back to work as soon as appropriate and possible;
- Save the cost of temporary/permanent replacement and hard-to-measure loss of that employee's experience and expertise;
- Get immediate help and resources for the employee after an illness or injury;
- Align and coordinate with existing programs to ensure services are delivered efficiently and effectively; and
- Participate in data collection and the creation of a best practice approach for businesses and the Commonwealth.

RETAIN Kentucky Team

- Kentucky Department for Workforce Investment
- CHI Saint Joseph Health Partners
- Coalition for Workforce Diversity
- KentuckianaWorks Workforce Development Board
- Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services
- Kentucky Department for Public Health
- Kentucky Department of Workers' Claims
- Kentucky Disability Determination Services
- Kentucky Hospital Association
- Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
- The Council of State Governments
- University of Kentucky Human Development Institute

Kentucky Career Center

WIOA Regions

- Central Region: Bluegrass, Kentuckiana Works, Lincoln Trail, Northern Kentucky
- East Region: EKCEP, TENCO
- South Region: Cumberlands, South Central
- West Region: Green River, West Kentucky

WIOA Boundaries

- WIOA Boundaries



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EDUCATION & WORKFORCE STATISTICS

If you would like more information about RETAIN Kentucky, contact Beth Potter at 859-948-3859 or Beth.Potter@uky.edu.

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