

## **RETAIN Demonstration Projects**

### ***What is RETAIN?***

The RETAIN Demonstration Projects are a collaborative effort led by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) in partnership with DOL's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) and the Social Security Administration (SSA). RETAIN—*Retaining Employment and Talent after Injury/Illness Network*—projects will test the impact of early intervention strategies that improve stay-at-work/return-to-work (SAW/RTW) outcomes of individuals who experience work disability while employed. Work disability is defined as an injury, illness, or medical condition that has the potential to inhibit or prevent continued employment or labor force participation.

SAW/RTW programs succeed by returning injured or ill workers to productive work as soon as medically possible during their recovery process and by providing interim part-time or light duty work and accommodations, as necessary. The RETAIN Demonstration Projects are modeled after promising programs operating in Washington State, including the [Centers of Occupational Health and Education \(COHE\)](#), the [Early Return to Work \(ERTW\)](#), and the [Stay at Work](#) programs. While these programs operate within the state's workers' compensation system and are available only to people experiencing work-related injuries or illnesses, the RETAIN Demonstration Projects provide opportunities to improve SAW/RTW outcomes for both occupational and non-occupational injuries and illnesses of people who are employed, or at a minimum in the labor force, when their injury or illness occurs.

Central to these projects is the early coordination of health care and employment-related supports and services to help injured or ill workers remain in the workforce. These supports and services include:

- Training in occupational health best practices for participating health care providers;
- Active involvement of a Return-to-Work Coordinator throughout the medical recovery period to facilitate continued employment;
- Enhanced communication among workers, employers, and health care providers;
- Accommodations and job modifications; and
- Retraining and rehabilitation services.

To accomplish this, projects will provide services through an integrated network of partners that includes close collaboration between state and/or local workforce development entities, health care systems and/or health care provider networks, and other partners as appropriate.

The primary goals of the RETAIN Demonstration Projects are:

1. To increase employment retention and labor force participation of individuals who acquire, and/or are at risk of developing, work disabilities; and
2. To reduce long-term work disability among project participants, including the need for Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income.

The ultimate purpose of the demonstration is to validate and expand implementation of evidence-based strategies to accomplish these goals.



## *Retaining Employment and Talent after Injury/Illness Network*

### ***Phased Funding***

The RETAIN Demonstration Projects will span a total of five years and be funded in two phases. Phase 1 is 18 months and includes planning and start-up activities, including the launch of a small pilot demonstration within nine months of award. Approximately \$20,000,000 is available for up to eight state workforce agencies during Phase 1. Each state may receive up to \$2,500,000 for Phase 1 activities.

At the end of Phase 1, up to four of the Phase 1 awardees may be competitively awarded up to \$19,750,000 each to fully implement their projects in Phase 2. Phase 2 will span 42 months, including 30 months for project implementation and 12 months for close-out and final assessment activities. If funds are available in future years, DOL may award additional Phase 2 cooperative agreements to Phase 1 awardees not initially selected for Phase 2.

### ***Who Can Apply?***

Eligible applicants are:

- State Departments of Labor, State Workforce Development Agencies, or an equivalent entity with responsibility for labor, employment, and/or workforce development; and
- Entities described in section 166(c) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act relating to Indian and Native American programs.

### ***Partners***

Successful implementation will require sustained, meaningful involvement of key partners. The following partners are required:

- State Health Departments or equivalent entities generally responsible for managing, regulating, or influencing the provision of health services;
- Public or private health care systems practicing coordinated care and population health management; and
- The State Workforce Development Board.

In addition to the required partners, each project will establish a RETAIN Leadership Team to collectively meet program objectives and drive better resource integration at the local level.

### ***Technical Assistance and Independent Evaluation***

ODEP will fund a RETAIN Technical Assistance (TA) Provider to help awardees plan and start the Phase 1 projects and implement Phase 2 activities.

SSA will fund an independent evaluator to finalize the evaluation design for each project during Phase 1 and implement its evaluation of the demonstration projects during Phase 2.

### ***Contact Us***

For more information visit [dol.gov/odep](http://dol.gov/odep) or email [SAW-RTW@dol.gov](mailto:SAW-RTW@dol.gov).

