

Best Practices in Employee Retention and Return-to-Work:

An In-Depth Look Inside an Exemplary
American Corporation

National Disability Institute's LEAD Center

*Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of
People with Disabilities*



LEAD CENTER

Best Practices in Employee Retention and Return-to-Work: An In-Depth Look Inside an Exemplary American Corporation

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Foreword by Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)

Many factors are prompting America to change the way it thinks about age and work. The economic downturn, shifting perceptions of retirement, increased workplace flexibility, and the aging of the baby boomer generation all contribute to people working longer. Many of these capable, experienced mature workers develop disabilities as they age. To retain the talents of these valuable, skilled workers, employers can implement a variety of workplace practices, many of which benefit all workers and make good business sense.

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has a long commitment to the inclusion and retention of people with disabilities in America's workforce. DOL's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) funds national training and technical assistance on this important issue. The National Technical Assistance and Research Center to Promote Leadership for Increasing the Employment and Economic Independence of Adults with Disabilities (NTAR Leadership Center), funded by ODEP from 2007-2012, issued a number of reports that examined the disability implications of an aging workforce. In October 2012, ODEP awarded a grant to National Disability Institute (NDI) to create the National Center on Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of People with Disabilities (LEAD Center). The LEAD Center brings together a range of organizations, thought leaders, and best-practice innovators to expand policy, employment, leadership and economic advancement opportunities and outcomes for all people with disabilities. The LEAD Center's partners represent the business, disability, and workforce development communities working to increase understanding and knowledge about sustainable and replicable practices that advance employment and economic mobility for workers with disabilities, including mature workers who may have acquired disabilities. One of the goals of the LEAD Center grant is to implement and document effective retention and return-to-work policies and strategies at both the individual and systems level for workers with disabilities and mature workers.

More information about the LEAD Center can be found on their website at www.leadcenter.org. In addition, relevant resources can be found at the end of this report and on ODEP's website at www.dol.gov/odep/topics/olderworkers.htm. These web resources include reports from ODEP and other DOL agencies as well as from ODEP partners such as the Society of Human Resource Management and the American Association of Retired Persons. Finally, ODEP has two toolkits particularly relevant to this topic. The Workplace Flexibility Toolkit found under the RESOURCES tab on the LEAD Center website or at www.dol.gov/odep/workplaceflexibility/ has 182 resources on how to implement workplace flexibility strategies. ODEP also developed a return-to-work toolkit providing additional strategies on helping workers with disabilities return to their jobs. It can be found at www.dol.gov/odep/return-to-work/.

Executive Summary

As the workforce becomes increasingly diverse, companies increasingly seek strategies to maintain the health and productivity of their skilled workers and to accommodate older workers who may acquire disabilities. Many companies have created structures and practices that support employees with disabilities, illnesses, and injuries so that they can successfully remain in their jobs. Some companies are more successful than others at keeping these skilled experienced employees in the workforce. As noted by U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) in its Older Workers' report found at <http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/OlderWorkers.htm>, "To retain the talents of these valuable, skilled workers, employers can implement a variety of workplace practices, many of which benefit all workers and make good business sense."

ODEP and its National Center on Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of People with Disabilities (LEAD Center)¹ studied best practices at a large, successful U.S. corporation (hereinafter, "the corporation") to learn about and document effective retention and return-to-work policies and practices. This report highlights best practices and strategies gleaned from the corporation at the individual, workplace, and systems levels that benefit employers and employees. The corporation is not identified by name, but their culture, workforce, benefits, and programs that support employees and managers are described. The report also describes replicable practices and offers suggestions that can be adopted by employers to support and retain their workforce and enable employees to safely return to work quickly and in a variety of flexible arrangements. This corporation has built a network of integrated support services, both internally and externally, that are available to supervisors, managers, and employees when someone experiences injury, illness or disability.

The corporation has been extremely thoughtful about how best to ensure that it retains its workforce. As a result, it has created effective and coordinated structures that shape and guide:

- How it communicates its corporate culture;
- The value it places on its workforce, treating employees like valued customers;
- Its desire to have service providers and vendors support its workforce work in an integrated collaborative manner, to the extent that they have made collaboration a requirement;
- Communication with employees who experience disability, injury or illness so that they receive needed support in a timely manner and know the extent to which they are valued; and
- The training and support received by their supervisors and managers so that employees hear consistent positive messages and receive timely support, especially if they are not able to be at work for a period of time or cannot do all of the essential functions of their job.

¹ The LEAD Center is a collaborative of disability, workforce, and economic empowerment organizations led by National Disability Institute dedicated to advancing sustainable individual and systems-level change to improve employment outcomes and economic self-sufficiency for all people with disabilities.

Project Overview

Goals/Objectives of the Project

By studying the best practices of a large successful U.S. corporation, ODEP and the LEAD Center sought to learn about, document, and disseminate effective retention and return-to-work policies and strategies at the individual, workplace, and systems levels to benefit employers, workforce professionals, and workers with disabilities. Hence, the LEAD Center sought to:

1. Study how a corporation protected the employability of the aging workforce and employees experiencing work or non-work related injury, illness, or disability;
2. Identify and/or confirm those factors that influence an employer's ability to manage disability in the workplace; and
3. Identify effective practices and strategies at both the system level and individual level to reduce the impact of work-related disability.

Scope of Work

The LEAD Center sought out a large American corporation willing to serve as a demonstration site to provide insight into employer challenges and the solutions currently in place to address them. A large multisite corporation was selected to ensure that their workforce would be diverse and would represent urban, rural and suburban settings. The corporation also needed to be open to sharing replicable practices with other American businesses. The study sought to identify and document effective policies, practices, and strategies working at both the individual and system level with the focus on the corporation's ability to retain people with disabilities in their workforce. The researchers looked at key strategies, processes, interventions, business practices, and programs that could help other businesses learn how to build and sustain cost-effective practices that could successfully retain mature workers and/or workers with disabilities.

Description of the Corporation

The corporate subject of this analysis will not be identified by name. A brief summary of the corporation is provided to describe its scope, structure, systems, business needs, and challenges to provide context for how it responds to disability, injury, and illness in the workplace within its numerous sites across multiple states.

This retail corporation attributes its success to the loyalty of its customers, the hard work of its employees, and its agility and innovation in the marketplace in providing the best value for high quality goods and services. The corporation's stores generally operate seven days a week. The corporation relies heavily on computer systems to process transactions, summarize results, and manage the business.

The corporation's ability to attract, train and retain highly qualified employees is critical to its business and financial condition, and the success of its operation. The corporation realizes that its success depends, to a significant degree, on the continued contribution of members of the senior management and other key operations, merchandising and administrative personnel, and that the loss of these employees could have an adverse effect on the corporation. As is true in

most businesses, the corporation must attract, train, and retain a large and growing number of highly qualified employees, while controlling related labor costs and maintaining core values. The corporation invests significant resources in training and motivating employees. It experiences both low turnover and high employee retention, with turnover at 6 percent after the first year of employment and average employment tenure of 10 years in a retail industry that typically has high turnover.

Corporate Culture and Ethics: The corporate culture creates a guiding ethic for the corporation's business practices that is effectively communicated among employees and directs the thinking and behavior of the leadership, encourages decentralized operational management, and is infused into all programs and services. All suppliers/vendors also are educated about the corporate culture and how the corporation expects services to be delivered. There is a strong leadership that drives decision-making regarding compensation and benefits design. "Do the right thing for employees" is the corporate mantra. Employees are treated as "customers" and acknowledged as important company assets. In promoting job retention and supporting employees to stay at or return to work following an injury or illness, taking care of its employees means having "the right benefits, under the right plan, at the right time." This philosophy led to the creation of an Integrated Leave Department that provides integrated services through a network of vendors/suppliers. Taking care of employees also means providing a living wage, good benefits, promoting from within, and seamless income protection should illness/injury preclude them from working.

Workforce Characteristics: This Corporation has a mix of 50 percent full-time and 50 percent part-time employees to meet its business needs. The average age of its workers is 38. Almost 15 percent of full-time employees are more than 50 years of age and 6.3 percent of the part-time employees are more than 50. Fifty-five percent of its workers are male and 45 percent are female.

Selection and Placement: Employees are hired for specific job categories, with some positions overlapping in job duties. The corporation has committed to promoting from within and, therefore, job postings are listed internally for 10 days before being advertised elsewhere. As a result, 80 to 90 percent of promotional positions are filled from within. All management positions are posted regionally and hourly jobs are posted by location. Many employees move from part-time positions to full-time ones. On average, this transition takes four years to achieve. The majority of employees have worked at the retail floor level and have rotated or applied for other positions.

Relevant Information about Job Characteristics and Job Orientation: Most positions provide on-the-job training and cross-training for other positions. Job-related orientation includes videos focusing on the corporation's culture in which the founder talks about the mission and code of ethics. Employees also are given a tour of the facilities and a safety orientation. Training, including benefits training, occurs via a mix of face-to-face training and e-learning.

A physical or medical evaluation is not required. However, employees must be able to meet the demands of the job, which are predominantly within the medium physical-demand level.

Compensation and Benefits: The Corporation pays extremely competitive hourly rates and rewards long-term employees for longevity. For both full-time and part-time employees (i.e., 24 or more hours), benefits include health care; a pharmacy program; dental coverage; a vision program; a health care reimbursement account; a dependent care reimbursement account; long-term disability insurance; voluntary short-term disability insurance (paid by employees); long-term care insurance; life insurance, accidental death and dismemberment insurance; an employee assistance program (EAP) with case management and a 24/7 referral service; an employee stock purchase plan; a 401(k) plan; and paid time off (i.e., holidays, vacations, sick/personal leave, bereavement leave) that is dependent on hours worked and longevity with the corporation. The corporation recently restructured its leave department to integrate and combine the workers' compensation leave specialists with non-occupational leave and absence specialists.

Leave of Absence Programs and Administration: The corporation offers liberal leave of absence, whether paid or unpaid, to accommodate work-life balance needs. Given its multi-state presence, the corporation keeps extensive information and resources on an Intranet to address varying state and federal leave of absence requirements. The corporation manages all Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), workers compensation, and disability leave requests locally in a decentralized model.

Promising Practices that Promote Employee Retention and Return-to-Work

The Corporation created a broad array of programs and services that promote the prevention and management of disability and/or that support health and well-being. The corporation is committed to reducing the impact of injury, illness, and disability on their employees by offering a comprehensive disability management program, ensuring that employees have access to integrated support from within the corporation, strategically engaging vendors in their stay-at-work and return-to-work initiatives, and providing transitional return-to-work and prevention programs.

Disability Management Services

Vendors/suppliers are available to employees to provide services to both prevent and manage disability. The corporation has a unique approach in providing these services, requiring suppliers to work together with other vendors as appropriate.

The corporation has forged partnerships, created linkages, and ensured that services are integrated and that vendors collaborate. This provides assurance for employees who know that a network of resources is available to them through this Corporation's network of vendors and suppliers. These partnerships include suppliers with:

- disability-related programs (workers compensation, short- and long-term disability);
- employee assistance programs;
- disease management programs;
- wellness, health care, and rehabilitation programs; and

- other medical and clinical support services.

Outsourcing and requiring vendors/suppliers to collaborate with each other simplifies the administration of company's disability-related programs and provides a coordinated and personalized approach for employees. For example, short-term and long-term disability programs are designed to work seamlessly with leave administration, claims administration and disability case management. Vendors are available to facilitate the medical care including case management and paperwork assistance. Suppliers for short- and long-term disability insurance and workers compensation benefits work together. This might include a claims specialist, a nurse case manager, and/or return-to-work (RTW) coordinator. Other professionals who may be included are vocational rehabilitation specialists and safety and loss control professionals. These integrated services aim to develop individual-specific, cost-effective return-to-work plans, whether the employee's absence from work is occupationally-related or not. Employees also have access to a team of professionals who can provide counseling and/or education to respond to new health conditions or help them manage chronic conditions.

Coordinated and Robust Internal Resources and Benefits

Centralized Support for Integrated Leave

The corporation created its Integrated Leave Department to ensure that employees have the support they require. Specialists are available to assist employees and management in the administration of leave policies. The corporation recently consolidated all leave requests for work-related and non-work related illnesses and injuries under one umbrella. Although all leave requests are managed at the local level, Integrated Leave Specialists handle requests for assistance and manage permanent accommodations for work-related and non-work-related illnesses and injuries.

The Integrated Leave Department's charge is: "Taking Care of Employees Means the Right Benefits, under the Right Plan, at the Right Time."

Communication – Employee/Manager Access to Benefit and Policy Information on the Website

The corporation has an Internet portal through which employees and managers can gain access to comprehensive benefits information, including but not limited to health care, dental, vision, pharmacy, and behavioral health. The website is simple to use and easy to navigate. The health care portal allows live access to numerous educational and vendor referral services (e.g., nurses, pharmacists, dietitians, social workers, behavioral health counselors, etc.). The corporation's website also provides benefits information on disability insurance, workers compensation, long-term care insurance, Medicare assistance, life insurance, and survivor benefits. Employees may enroll in or change health care benefits, access a navigator for providers, or link to hospitals in the network.

The corporation also has an Intranet, which serves as an information portal for supervisors, managers and employees with information specific to its practices and forms. The site, in part, is

organized by state. A striking feature is the consistency, simplicity and ease of use in accessing forms and processes across the multi-state platform. The site also contains educational video clips, podcasts, and trainings, which are offered and archived there.

Training Management

The corporation has several platforms to provide resources and training to the management at their decentralized store locations. They conduct monthly calls to store locations from the Integrated Leave Department on specific topics related to RTW, leave, the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), etc. Training sessions on how to interact with employees and how to identify signs of distress are built into management training. Ongoing training also occurs through multiple service providers and is available for employees to access when they encounter a health or family crisis. Managers also are trained on effectively communicating with employees to ensure an early and safe return-to-work, as part of their recovery process.

Vendor Integration and Support

The corporation has taken impressive steps to engage the vendors who support its Stay-at-Work and Return-to-Work processes in collaborating and integrating the services. Services are customized to the corporation's culture and capacity for workplace flexibility. Service integration has increased their efficiency and effectiveness, thereby reducing the disruptive impact of injury and illness on employees' work and personal lives. This collaboration and integration of services better ensures that employees are supported more fully and in a coordinated manner, helping them ultimately to remain in the workforce.

To systematize this collaboration and integration of services, the corporation employed the following:

Business Agreements

The corporation ensured that there are business agreements in place between the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), workers compensation carrier, health care plan, short- and long-term disability carrier, disability management service providers, and wellness service providers. These were established, in part, to remove barriers to communication, particularly in response to Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act or HIPAA rules. These agreements have clearly improved collaboration and communication amongst vendors. This business strategy is replicable and highly desirable for other companies to emulate.

Annual Summit

Each year, all vendors are invited to the corporation's headquarters for a two-day summit in which presentations are made about its services and access points. Vendors familiarize themselves with the services available through other suppliers. At first, these vendors viewed others as competitors and were uncomfortable with the concept of a summit. Communication was initially strained since some had competing services. However, the corporation has held these summits for five years and, each time, the resistance has lessened and collaborative interventions evolved. That is, collaborative efforts with the EAP; workers compensation program; short- and long-term disability programs; the health care plan; suppliers of prevention,

health and wellness services; and case management providers made each provider aware of resources and referrals available when an employee needs assistance. Vendors can conduct outreach, send a soft referral or alert another provider regarding an employee's possible need for their services. For example, the EAP staff may learn that an employee wants more education about nutrition or a medication's side effects. The EAP staff can then inform the employee about the vendors and/or facilitate a connection to an appropriate vendor who offers those services via a "warm transfer" so that they can connect the employee to a dietitian, nurse, or pharmacist. Should employees with chronic health conditions want support in coping with or adjusting to their condition, they may be referred to a vendor who can link them to support groups and disease management professionals. Vendors have learned to "actively" listen and respond since they have access to resources from other vendors to offer assistance. Each supplier has a resource list of all the corporation's service providers with contact information so that they can create a linkage when the need presents itself.

Monthly Grand Rounds

All suppliers participate in monthly "grand rounds," which are meetings to discuss individual employees with other vendors to determine how best to improve or provide services appropriate to the situation. Case review calls between vendors also provide opportunities for collaboration in instances where multiple needs are identified. The meetings are approximately one hour in length and are initiated by any of the suppliers, including the health care provider when the issues are medically driven and multifaceted. If there is a release of information, the interdisciplinary rounds will be specific to a named employee. Alternatively, each vendor may share someone's situation anonymously for discussion and for collaborators to offer solutions.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Supplier and Referral Sources

Early and periodic intervention is built into the system's design, and employees receive support from multiple services and professionals at multiple junctures. The EAP makes outreach calls for preventative services to people who are off work and receiving workers compensation at 21 days and again in 60 days. Calls are made to keep people connected and make sure they are receiving paychecks, medical treatment and any other services needed to provide relief and improve recovery. The corporation's data show that at 21 days there is a 28-30 percent acceptance of services and/or resources while at 60 days there is a 70 percent acceptance of services and/or resources. Similarly, for people with non-occupational reasons for being out of work, a short-term disability (STD) RTW coordinator will reach out to employees who may benefit from Early Return-to-Work (ERTW) options so the person can transition gradually and safely back to work. Since most jobs in the corporation have moderate physical demands, gradual transitions help build confidence and endurance so that the employee does not have to go directly from a sedentary level of activity during recovery to the level of physical demands required by the job.

The long-term disability (LTD) carrier also refers employees to EAP services should they identify a need. Providers of workers' compensation and LTD services have been trained on how to "drill down" and ask questions in a nonintrusive way to screen employees for issues for which EAP service providers can offer support if needed. The corporation views EAP services as a

preventative pathway instituted to provide a counseling check-in to see if there are any needs for intervention or services that could be dealt with early. Overall, EAP utilization is up from 3 percent to 13.8 percent. This is largely due to promotion by vendors, supervisory training and word of mouth from employees.

Return-to-Work Coordination

The STD carrier has a RTW coordinator assigned to work with employees on STD. This is a dedicated position created by the corporation because of their RTW commitment focused on facilitating an employee's early and safe return to work. The coordinator works directly with affected employees, physicians/health care providers, and local locations. Their responsibilities include: 1) obtaining input, support, and understanding of expectations from workers, employers, and health care providers; 2) designing and implementing individualized return-to-work plans, including the identification of barriers and development of methods to address them; 3) identifying and facilitating transitional work when needed; and 4) coordinating ongoing recovery and rehabilitation efforts, particularly through the maintenance of communication.

Through effective early outreach and intervention to employees, the RTW coordinator works to both reduce the risk of employees moving from STD to LTD and to facilitate their return-to-work. The RTW coordinator works closely with the employee and their physicians/health care providers to ensure that the latter address individual functional capacities at home and work. They also assist with obtaining the medical justification for any proposed time away from work.

At times, even with the best early intervention, a medical condition will not allow the employee to return to their former occupation during the STD period, and it becomes apparent that the employee will ultimately enter the long-term disability phase. Should employees miss work for six months, they are instructed to contact the LTD carrier, even if they are receiving workers compensation or state disability benefits.

Long-Term Disability (LTD)

After 180 days of absence from work related to a medical condition, the long-term disability plan replaces up to 60 percent of an employee's monthly pre-disability earnings. After six months of LTD payments, the employee may qualify for the health care protection benefit, which helps to defray the cost of health care coverage. Additional services become available, as described under Medical and Vocational Rehabilitation below.

Medical and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

Once an employee becomes eligible for LTD, medical and vocational rehabilitation specialists are available to assist in a variety of ways. Vocational rehabilitation specialists can work with the Integrated Leave Specialist to identify other positions the employee could perform in the company and/or explore ways to offer accommodations in their original job to allow for their successful work return. If returning to their occupation is not feasible after appropriate job assessment meetings and exploration of reasonable accommodations, the VR specialist from the LTD carrier can determine an employee's ability to enter other occupations through a vocational assessment and transferable skills analysis. In some cases, additional training can

be provided. In other cases, retraining to supplement existing skills may not be the most feasible alternative. Depending on the individual situation, the VR specialist can provide vocational testing and assist the employee in enrolling in an appropriate training program.

The VR specialist can develop a rehabilitation plan and provide placement support as needed. If the employee cannot return to their position, that support may include job seeking skills training and direct job placement services. If the employee may be transitioning to another job or field, the VR specialist can conduct an employability evaluation using information from the assessment and the claim that may have been filed to identify alternative occupations the employee would be capable of performing, given their current restrictions and limitations. The VR specialist also can research labor market information and data to assure that occupations in which the employee is interested are hiring. If the employee's medical condition precludes reemployment, he/she may stay on LTD benefits until age 67 and, in some instances, longer depending on the circumstances and their age when they became disabled.

The availability of Vocational Rehabilitation varies by state and can be arranged through the LTD program, workers compensation or other sources. The corporation does not mandate VR.

Transitional Return-to-Work and Prevention Programs

The Corporation has implemented a variety of programs and strategies to provide RTW support and to protect and sustain employee productivity. Their RTW support is a coordinated set of processes for establishing and monitoring alternatives at key decision points to guide both the supervisor and employee in establishing a plan for the safe resumption of work activity.

RTW Program Eligibility

All employees who have an illness or injury are eligible for the RTW program, regardless of the cause of the illness or injury (i.e., work or non-work related). The message the corporation sends is that they want employees to be able to return to work. The RTW process is the same for all employees and is implemented consistently corporation-wide.

RTW Procedures for an Individual Injured on the Job

Specific procedures may differ somewhat by geographic location. Once an employee reports to their manager/supervisor that an injury has occurred on the job, the manager/supervisor calls the supplier's Incident Intervention Line. Currently, this line is only available in some states, but it is in the process of being rolled out to others so that the employee can get guidance from a medical professional on next steps (e.g., medical treatment, medical evaluation, or self-care). The employee may be given self-care instructions and a toll-free phone number to contact a nurse should any questions or needs for medical assistance arise. If appropriate, a nurse may be engaged in incident management, through an incident intervention line, reaching out once or twice to the employee to monitor how they are doing. If medical attention is needed, the employee speaks with a physician and the physician will assist the employee with locating an approved medical provider and scheduling an appointment. Another nurse may be assigned on to assist with the workers compensation claim. This nurse serves as a case manager, reaching out periodically to the employee to monitor their progress and managing paperwork and the

exchange of information. The nurse also assists with medical reports, treatment plans, reports to insurance carriers, etc., all leading up to a completion of a medical release and return-to-work form by a health care provider. The form may reflect limitations and suggested transitional work assignments if available and appropriate.

RTW planning is done with the employee's supervisor and the employee. Some of the corporation's work sites may not have access to a vendor to assist with these processes. If this is the case, the supervisor/manager uses internal resources and templates developed for injury management and return-to-work. These resources include guidance on staying in touch with employees while they are off work, physician requirements for the RTW process, a transitional-duty task checklist to assist in planning for accommodations, a temporary transitional duty assignment letter, and other appropriate tools.

RTW System-Level Responses for Work-Related Injuries

The corporation maintains a library on its Intranet with workers' compensation information for management staff. The Intranet also includes information about selected vendors who can assist in ensuring that early and appropriate intervention is sought for each employee who incurs a work-related injury. Listings of resources include contact information for the workers' compensation regional specialist, regional in-network medical providers, and internal resources within the Integrated Leave Department. Required forms and report formats are also available through the Intranet.

RTW Decisions and Transitional Employment

One of the corporation's managers reviews the employee's work capacity and medical restrictions/limitations for permanent restrictions; temporary restrictions are handled at each location. The corporation has developed checklists of activities to help guide the development of a RTW plan. The job duties may be carved out of various jobs and/or customized to meet the employee's capacity and the needs of the store. Using this guidance, the manager develops a Transitional Employment RTW plan. The employee receives the plan in the form of a Transitional Employment letter in which they are offered a temporary modified job opportunity. The employee can then accept or reject the offer. If the employee rejects the offer or does not want to return to work, they are referred to the insurance carrier because workers' compensation benefits or other income replacements (i.e., short- or long-term disability) may be suspended. Should the employee accept the transitional employment offer, their work will be monitored by the supervisor. The employee is instructed to adhere to their work restrictions and inform their supervisor if, for any reason, they cannot perform the job tasks. Local stores manage the temporary employment plan for 12 weeks. Whenever medical restrictions are reduced or eliminated, the process repeats with review of the employee's capacity and, in most instances, an increase in job demands and productivity. Each time a change in the plan occurs, a new Transitional Employment letter is issued with updated plan.

On-Site Rehabilitation

In some locations, physical therapists are contracted for by the corporation to be on-site. These therapists are available to provide therapy, coaching, work conditioning guidance, education on

proper posture when working, and general education to prevent injury or re-injury. While this is an expensive option, the corporation found they have fewer no-shows for therapy, less time off for therapy appointments, improved recovery, and lower indemnity costs. In keeping with the integrated model, therapists report employee progress to case managers, who may share information with the employee's medical provider.

Length of Transitional Employment RTW Program

There is an expectation that transitional employment RTW can last up to 12 weeks. If the employee is assigned to a position with a lower pay classification, the employee will continue to receive their normal rate of pay. After 12 weeks, the employee's status will be reevaluated. If the employee is reclassified on a temporary basis, the employee will be paid at the rate for the position they are performing. If the employee cannot return to their original position after 12 weeks, they can get a brief extension by submitting appropriate medical documentation and with approval from the Integrated Leave Department and a high-level manager if there is a strong likelihood that a brief extension will enable them to perform their essential job functions. This extension often helps older workers who may take more time to recover. These practices are applied corporation-wide.

Central Information Management System (CIMS)

The corporation developed an information management system that captures information on extended leave, workers compensation, and the status of employees. The system is capable of generating reports as the corporation moves away from non-electronic forms of recordkeeping. This system also is used to manage the corporation's chargeback system through which they manage workers compensation charges to business units. The CIMS reports RTW practices and, for people who can return quickly even on a reduced schedule or with reduced responsibilities, there is no chargeback to the business unit. This encourages the application of RTW strategies. Through this system, individual stores have access to information on the cost of workers compensation and other costs that relate to an employee being on disability leave.

Reasonable Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations are explored through the use of a *Job Assessment Meeting (JAM)*. If an employee requires accommodations due to medical restrictions or other limitations, their supervisor can request a JAM. The Integrated Leave Specialist assists in conducting the meeting to address any need for reasonable accommodations. At the meeting, they have a dialogue with the employee to determine if they can perform the essential parts of their job, with or without reasonable accommodation. This reasonable accommodation might include job modifications, assistive technology, schedule changes, medical or adaptive equipment, ergonomic interventions, etc. so that the employee can perform their job. Should accommodations not be feasible, the employee is assisted in exploring other job opportunities that are open. If they are qualified for an open position, they can be placed in that position, generally without competition.

Separation: Indefinite Medical Leave or No Medical Release to Work

If remedies are exhausted and the person is unable to obtain a medical release to return to work in any capacity, a separation may occur. Following separation, follow-up letters are sent to determine if the employee's restrictions remain in effect. The letter indicates that, if the employee can obtain a medical release to return to work, the process for reemployment may be reopened.

Job Descriptions/Job Analysis

Job descriptions are continually reviewed. A job analysis is available for every position, which includes the mental and physical demands of the job along with a detailing of the essential functions. Nonessential functions are also listed with the accompanying physical demand levels. Conditions for working are identified. Ergonomic analysis is conducted as needed to determine the need for modifications or accommodations to address safety, training, and specific job functions. Training is done on proper posture when working and on safe lifting techniques. Should an employee express a need for ergonomic adjustments or equipment, it is addressed. Safety and injury prevention are a strong focus in this corporation, and each location has a safety committee to address issues that may arise.

Employee Satisfaction Assessment

The corporation contracts with an external vendor to conduct periodic satisfaction surveys on the leave and RTW programs and their suppliers/vendors. The surveys are randomly assigned and confidential. Because the employee is considered a customer with respect to their benefits, the corporation values their assessment of the services available and quality of the vendors who provide them. Employees are asked for feedback on how the programs are working and how they can be improved. Overall, the results the corporation has received are favorable. However, the corporation carefully reviews areas of dissatisfaction so that issues can be addressed.

Replicable Practices

Corporate Culture

As was done by this corporation, businesses should actively create and communicate a culture where employees feel valued and critical to the success of the organization. This practice attracts and retains a workforce that is engaged, productive, and satisfied with their jobs – even the most routine and physically demanding ones. When employees know that they are valued, there is reduced turnover and absenteeism. Employees in these environments want to stay at work and/or return to work after an injury or illness. They also are motivated to remain with the employer longer.

Integration of Disability Management and Other Vendor Services

Each employee's situation is unique and many employees may have complex needs. There are clear benefits to creating an infrastructure in which vendors who provide benefits and RTW services are required to network with each other, refer employees to each other, and

collaborate. Employers will enhance an employee's chances of successfully returning to work when all of the service providers who support them follow the same protocols and have the same expectations and goals. Employees are more likely to be connected to needed services. Suppliers/vendors learn to actively listen for key triggers that identify employees' needs, make referrals across vendor groups, and collaborate with other vendors to ensure that employees do not fall through the cracks.

To replicate this seamless service delivery, brought about by integration and collaboration, employers can:

- Forge vendor partnerships and encourage communication and collaboration by providing platforms for them to learn about each other's resources;
- Develop business agreements to enhance communication and overcome potential HIPAA noncompliance;
- Schedule annual and/or periodic meetings with opportunities for vendors to communicate and share information with each other and with managers;
- Ensure that all vendors have access to current information on available resources from the network so that they can make referrals to other vendors; and
- Educate vendors on organization's corporate culture so that their work supports the corporation's mission, vision and values, as they relate to support for the workforce, employee retention, and support for people with disabilities.

Income Protection

Businesses can work with their vendors/suppliers to ensure that systems are in place so the employee does not miss a paycheck should delays occur in determining their status or eligibility for workers compensation or another income replacement program. For example, should there be a delay or indecision about whether a workers compensation claim is compensable, workers compensation staff will contact the short-term disability carrier to process a claim and issue paycheck until the compensability issues are resolved. Should the claim be determined compensable, the workers compensation administrator will reimburse the short-term disability carrier. Therefore, corporations should create agreements between their vendors for seamless income protection. This business practice supports employees; better assures that they will return to work; lessens any hardship from lost or interrupted income for an employee experiencing injury, disability, or illness; lessens the development of adversarial relationships; and decreases the likelihood of unnecessary litigation.

Connecting Short- and Long-Term Disability Coverage

The corporation's short-term disability (STD) plan is with the same carrier that pays for long-term disability (LTD). The STD plan is voluntary (employee paid) and the LTD is company paid. Benefits are seamless because of this arrangement and its integrated leave approach. This corporation found that employees appreciated the coordinated income replacement and that offering limited paid time off along with short-term disability income replacement decreased benefits abuse and increased the predictability of employee attendance. The corporation also recommends that employers examine their benefit programs to ensure that they are not creating

unintended incentives whereby employees cannot earn more money by remaining on disability benefits rather than returning to work.

Designing Long-Term Disability Plan to Encourage Return-to-Work

The corporation's LTD plan is designed to reward partial RTW. Payments methods are not jeopardized by an employee's attempt to RTW. The LTD plan encourages movement to any type of work and/or numbers of hours, with flexibility in the plan that allows for trial RTW periods. Therefore, employers should review and/or revise their plans to ensure that they encourage attempts to RTW without penalizing employees who may not succeed by causing them to become ineligible for benefits. This review is especially important for employees who had extended disability, illness, or injury-related absences.

Consistent Messaging and Clear Easy Access to Information

The corporation sends a consistent singular message to employees, whether they have a work-related or non-work-related injury, illness or disability-related condition. That is, employees know that the corporation wants them to return to work and to do so in both a safe and timely way. An employee's absence, regardless of the cause, is lost time. Also, physicians who specialize in occupational medicine view RTW as "good medicine," writing work prescriptions as part of the treatment process. Keeping people out of work needlessly is counterproductive for the employee and the corporation. The corporation wants employees to come back to work safely, with their return-to-work process as a part of the employee's recovery, whether their absence was due to a work-related or non-work-related issue. Here, a gradual return-to-work process aligned with their healing and/or recovery process is a safe and positive solution, especially for someone who has been sedentary and needs to build up their strength and stamina for a job that may have physical demands. The corporation found that sending a consistent singular message to employees about RTW increases their trust in management. Hence, the Transitional Return-to-Work program is viewed as a benefit by employees.

Training and Support in Managing the Return-to-Work Process

The corporation provides training for supervisors so that they can effectively manage RTW and disability management processes. As described previously in this report, both internal and external supports and resources also are readily available on an ongoing basis. The corporation expects management to "stay in touch" with workers when disability, illness or injury arises. It fosters this behavior by providing training, guidance on how best to communicate and stay engaged with employees, resources, and support through the network of vendors and the internal Integrated Leave Department. Specifically, managers provide outreach that communicates that they and the corporation care and have not forgotten about the employee. The corporation found that this practice strengthens the employee's connection to their workplace and increases the likelihood that they will view themselves as a valued employee. This goes a long way in counterbalancing any messages received from the medical, clinical, and therapeutic people who view them primarily as a patient or claimant. When their manager calls them, they are reminded that they are a valued employee within a workplace that wants them to return.

Therefore, businesses should develop consistent approaches for communicating with employees who are out of work on extended leave, regardless of the reason, and train supervisors and managers on effectively communicating with them as part of the company's RTW processes. Communication and outreach can make the difference between losing someone from the workforce and supporting their safe and timely return, even if that return happens gradually. In some locations of the corporation, managers send get well cards, newsletters, and invitations to picnics or social events associated with the employee's store location. Supervisors and managers need to be trained on appropriate nonintrusive communication techniques, and how to document their contacts. Trainings can aid a manager in defining boundaries so that their outreach does not intrude on the person's privacy or violate their rights.

Interrelated Communication Processes

The corporation ensures that all stakeholders get the information they need to make decisions in order to meet the employee's immediate medical, vocational, and financial needs. The corporation has a toolkit of communication forms that:

- invite the medical community to become a partner in the RTW process;
- inform employees of its ability to accommodate restricted duty; and
- provide objective information to managers to help them make informed employment decisions.

The corporation maintains updated job analysis information explaining the mental and physical demands of the job so that medical providers can be aware of the job requirements. The corporation supplies work prescription forms to medical providers that enable them to focus on the employee's functional abilities and medical restrictions to promote the safest, most timely RTW.

The corporation contracts with vendors in targeted geographical areas to facilitate appropriate referrals to medical providers who can help the employee get the best medical care and promote a dialogue about their RTW. This ensures that everyone understands the work requirements, the corporation's desire for the employee to return to work safely and as quickly as possible, and the corporation's capacity to provide a modified work assignment. These partnerships expedite communication between the corporation and medical providers, and ensure that necessary paperwork is processed. Should vendors not be available in a geographic location, each retail site has access to the needed medical and communication forms on the Intranet, with clear instructions for usage.

The corporation has found that physicians and other medical professionals appreciate the access they have to timely objective information that they can incorporate into their RTW treatment and recovery plans. Enabling the medical professional to respond to functional capacity requirements with recommended medical restrictions and limitations invites them to work in partnership with both the employee and the corporation.

Different states have unique disability programs, regulations and reporting processes that need to be followed. Likewise workers compensation benefits and regulations vary from state to state.

The corporation manages this complex interplay with the stakeholders in each jurisdiction in which they do business so that it has the information needed to evaluate, approve, and process the claim, authorize treatment, and/or exchange information with medical providers, employees, and supervisors.

Therefore, recommendations for employers include:

- Provide streamlined, easily-accessed processes and formats for communication exchange between medical providers, employers and employees to ensure that everyone has the information they need to make decisions and plans;
- Establish a consistent platform across all locations to help reduce potentially costly information delays. This exchange may be done through disability management suppliers or internally with consistent guidance for management and employees to follow;
- Establish a comprehensive Intranet that guides RTW processes along with a library of resources tailored to individual locations and special circumstances. Internal websites should provide easy-to-find access to clear instructions, forms, letters, tools, procedures to follow, and contact information of key people.

Ensuring Regular Feedback from Customers and Employees

The corporation contracts with an external vendor to send satisfaction surveys to employees, vendors/suppliers, and medical providers to obtain information about services. By evaluating the satisfaction of all of these stakeholders, the corporation can regularly identify areas that need to be enhanced, continued, or improved. By gauging satisfaction of employees in general and with the RTW and SAW processes specifically, the corporation can reduce turnover, support longevity, and maintain a diverse workforce that successfully includes people with disabilities. By including regular satisfaction surveys into overall program evaluation, employers can fine tune their business practices and support their workforce by making timely changes when necessary.

Prevention Programs and Return-to-Work Strategies

The corporation has prepared “on the front end” to anticipate that accidents and illness/injury will occur and result in absences. Therefore, it has clear procedures for reporting disability, illness, or injury-related absences that may result in the need for temporary transitional employment or a leave of absence. They have guidance for RTW accommodations that are written and, if possible, preplanned. Consequently, there are banks of pre-identified job activities, some carved out from other positions, so that the corporation can offer employees a temporary modified and customized assignment in a RTW assignment.

Therefore, companies should expect disability, illness and/or injury to occur, and should be prepared with resources and planned protocols to quickly facilitate RTW. This includes:

- Clear policies that address the organization’s commitment to support employees so that they can stay at work or return to work;

- Clear written protocols that assist supervisors in knowing how to respond when an employee acquires a disability or has an illness or injury that impacts the performance of their job;
- Pre-planning so that supervisors and employees are aware of options for workplace flexibility and job modifications in preparation for RTW;
- Clearly communicated expectations for employees, supervisors, vendors, and other suppliers (e.g., medical and clinical services) with defined roles and responsibilities, and which can guide the decision-making process for supervisors and employees; and
- Processes and timelines for transitional employment from beginning to end, which are communicated to employees and managers.

Creating Financial Incentives for Return-to-Work through the Workers Compensation program

The corporation has designed a chargeback system for workers compensation, in which each retail location is given latitude in making initial work return plans. Locations are not charged with workers compensation costs if the employee is brought back to work, even if only part-time and/or in a modified position, within certain timeframes. Therefore, the corporation's system rewards retail locations for creating and supporting RTW accommodations; gives enough decision-making latitude for management to meet production needs; and provides a cost effective control that encourages supervisors and employees to stay-at-work or return-to-work, even if partially, following a work-related injury, illness, or disability.

The corporation acknowledges that workplace accidents and injuries are labor costs that need to be managed. Similarly, it ensures that managers know the costs related to these incidents so they can reduce or control them. Supervisors are critical in preventing injuries and accidents, and in responding and problem-solving when they do occur. The corporation has found that providing financial incentives can make a difference in reducing lost time and the costs associated with work-related disability. Also, policies support supervisors in returning employees to work even if only part-time and/or in modified positions. This is in contrast to other organizations that require that employees return only if they can do their full schedule and perform 100 percent of their job responsibilities.

Injury, Illness and Disability Management and Prevention

This corporation contracts with medical, therapeutic, and rehabilitation providers to offer on-site prevention and medical care and treatment in select geographic locations. These medical and rehabilitation professionals provide injury-prevention programs and offer guidance to employees who would benefit from professional help to cope with arthritis, chronic illness, or other disabling conditions. For example, an on-site physical therapist can coach employees on injury-prevention, guide people who are transitioning back to work through work conditioning or other therapeutic support, and can design restricted work activities into an employee's therapy. For this corporation, having medical providers come on-site is often only feasible in some of their larger store locations with a larger employee base. In those sites, it creates much easier access to medical, therapeutic and/or rehabilitative support. However, even in sites where this is not

feasible, the corporation communicates their commitment to wellness, prevention, and support so that employees remain in their workforce.

Recommendations to the Corporation

The corporation has created significant interrelated practices that put it at the forefront of organizations with a strong commitment to providing flexibility in their workplaces and encouraging employees to stay at work and return to work. It has constructed and implemented strategic programs and services to protect the health and employability of the workforce, in ways that both meet the needs of employees and maintain their business model by supporting the competitive delivery of its products and services.

The corporation has innovatively integrated internal and external health, disability, wellness, and prevention programs. This approach provides employees and managers with coordinated resources and programs, orchestrated by the Integrated Leave Department. Having an Integrated Leave Department is an innovation in and of itself, given its unique role and ability to aggregate and analyze data related to the workforce and the effectiveness of the corporation's management practices.

The following recommendations are offered for consideration and future planning to enhance its already exemplary integrated disability and prevention model.

1. Continue to evolve vendor collaboration and process flows at key interaction points, using data on the success of different approaches in different locations. As is current practice, this would be accomplished in collaboration with vendor partners, insurance companies, third-party administrators, suppliers, and internal resources so that consistent messages are conveyed and available tools and resources used. This will continue to ensure that employees gain access to the right services at the right time, enabling them to stay at work or return to work quickly and safely.
2. Retain and expand outreach through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and RTW consultants at critical points in the RTW process.
3. As the vendor integration progresses, require more information and data analysis from its external partners (i.e., vendors/suppliers). Given limited financial and time resources, this would enable the Corporation to drill down into important areas where actions can improve outcomes and results. Therefore, the corporation may want to hold these external partners accountable for providing key data in areas to inform future actions and decisions.
4. Review information and data to identify gaps that could assist in evaluating the success of current policies and initiatives, with clear objectives for what would be useful to learn. For example, currently, the Benefits Summary Description information has no information on the Transitional Employment and the RTW program. An analysis of this information would be useful in determining the success of those programs' approaches overall and by location.
5. Create brochures, similar to those created by the Vendors/Suppliers that are branded for the corporation, about the benefits of the Transitional Employment and the RTW

program, for distribution at the point of hire and/or when an incident, illness, or disability arises. Brochures may also be circulated and used by Vendors/Suppliers, and be shared with medical, therapeutic, and rehabilitation providers to enlighten them about the corporation's commitment to RTW and the role Vendors/Suppliers can play as part of the team providing treatment to an employee.

6. Add information to the post-hire orientation checklist on the RTW program so the corporation's commitment to disability awareness, prevention, and management begins at the point of hire. This is especially important in orienting and training supervisors and managers, given their critical role, but would be useful for all new employees.
7. Create evaluation measures and metrics for the RTW program. Currently, the corporation receives voluminous, data-rich reports from the outsourced workers compensation and Short-Term and Long-Term Disability providers. Having more information on RTW, enabling the corporation to monitor multiple demographic variables and costs, would help in guiding management decisions, modifying services, and/or initiating improvements.
8. Organize an internal RTW Committee to oversee and review the efficiency and effectiveness of the program, and its processes and outcomes. One goal could be to develop and/or analyze metrics around RTW and share results across the organization to illustrate outcomes achieved and identify the elements that have an impact. The committee also can make recommendations to improve practices and share successful strategies.
9. As the corporation invests in and improves its Human Resources Information System (HRIS) and expands its Central Information Management System (CIMS) capacities, there may be an opportunity to identify meaningful absence data points across locations so that it can measure, monitor, improve, and share strategies and practices between locations. At a minimum, the corporation can ensure that RTW information fields are built into the system (e.g., number of restricted duty days, participation levels of people in transitional employment, successful returns). This technology also can track FMLA and manage activity related to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
10. Continue to update and analyze job descriptions with functional, physical, mental, and social job demands, including an analysis of essential and non-essential job duties.
11. Currently training is offered in injury prevention (e.g., proper posture when moving merchandise) and employees have access to ergonomic assessments and modifications to reduce injury. The corporation should consider investing in a comprehensive worksite analysis to promote innovative ergonomic building designs; the application of universal design principles and practices for employees and customers; and the use of engineering-controlled or mechanical equipment to reduce accidents, injuries, and strain. Also, an ergonomist should review job descriptions and classifications to make wellness and injury prevention recommendations.
12. Analyze programs that have rehabilitation/medical professionals on-site to promote injury prevention, educate workers and supervisors, provide post-injury care and support if needed, and identify the key factors that have the most impact in preventing injury, reducing absenteeism, and promoting RTW.

13. Explore the use of telemedicine for consultation to reduce staffing costs and improve timely access to medical or therapeutic support.
14. Evaluate the locations that have a physical therapist or other therapeutic support on site for treatment. Where successful, consider having them build a progressive work-conditioning model that can be replicated at other locations. Such models provide guidance to supervisors and employees so that they can safely increase light work activities, gradually increase their strength and endurance, and likely experience a faster recovery and RTW.
15. Continue to conduct formal interactive Job Assessment Meetings (JAMs) as part of leave of absence management processes to recommend and assess accommodations over time, especially when an employee presents with permanent medical restrictions. Specifically, continue to review the functional job analysis; evaluate each case independently with a focus on the unique needs of each employee; if needed, seek out needed vocational rehabilitation providers, Job Accommodation Network (JAN) resources or other professionals to assist with reasonable accommodations, flexible scheduling, assistive devices or adaptive equipment, etc.; keep data on these activities; and offer qualified candidate reassignment when feasible.

Conclusions

This report describes a large American retail corporation's successful practices and strategies that enhance the retention for employees with disabilities, chronic illnesses, or injuries. The corporation has created a workplace culture, policies, practices, and an integrated benefits plan that embodies its commitment to attract and retain a diverse workforce that includes people with disabilities and mature workers. There were multiple strategic practices identified that were important to its success, including disability management programs, support for wellness and injury prevention, strong consistent communication and outreach, liberal leave of absence (LOA) options, transitional employment for employees returning to work, a network of external vendors to provide integrated support for disability management and prevention, and training and incentives for managers in supporting an employee's RTW. The corporation has suppliers and vendors who facilitate medical care and ensure the medical community has the right information to be an effective partner in the RTW process. The corporation increased its effectiveness by requiring and supporting these vendors in collaborating with each other to support common outcomes and commitment to its workforce. Other companies should consider replicating this integration of suppliers and vendors, promoting collaboration, and ensuring that employees experience a more seamless service and support for returning to work.

In the corporation, employees want to return to work not only because they are paid well and have good benefits, but because they trust management and know that they are working for a company that invests in and values their workforce. This culture is consistent from the CEO level through all levels of management.

Resources

Understanding Return-to-Work Initiatives

Office of Disability Employment Policy Workplace Flexibility Toolkit

The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) offers Return-to-Work toolkits for employers developing policies and for individuals seeking to return-to-work. The toolkits include resources for understanding and accessing accommodations, strategies for retaining workers, information about relevant laws, and more.

<http://www.dol.gov/odep/return-to-work/>

Workplace Flexibility Toolkit

Funded by ODEP in partnership with the Women's Bureau, the Workplace Flexibility Toolkit provides information to employees, employers, policymakers, and researchers about a unique approach to workplace flexibility. The Toolkit provides case studies, fact and tip sheets, issue briefs, reports, articles, websites, other toolkits, and frequently asked questions. It is searchable by these resources and by target audiences — employers, employees, researchers, and policymakers, as well as by type of workplace flexibility — place, time, and task.

<http://www.dol.gov/odep/workplaceflexibility/>

Workplace Flexibility: A Strategic Business Approach for an Inclusive Workplace

The Workplace Flexibility: A Strategic Business Approach for an Inclusive Workplace fact sheet provides many private-sector business examples on the benefits of workplace flexibility as well as how the federal government is using this business approach. The fact sheet addresses how workplace flexibility strategies can directly or indirectly help employers meet the goals of many federal regulations.

<http://www.dol.gov/odep/pdf/workplaceflexibility.pdf>

Strategies for Retaining Mature Workers

The key to being able to keep experienced workers may be through right job accommodations and flexible work arrangements. This toolkit provides resources that can help employers with their efforts to retain the talents of older workers.

<http://www.dol.gov/odep/return-to-work/employer-mature.htm>

Workplace Flexibility, Accommodation, and Assistive Technology

When Work Works

“When Work Works” is a nationwide initiative to bring research on workplace effectiveness and flexibility into community and business practice. When Work Works has developed guides and tools to implement flexible workplaces and highlights success stories from businesses using flexible work arrangements. It is a project of Families and Work Institute and the Society for Human Resource Management.

<http://www.whenworkworks.org/>

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

JAN is the leading source of free, expert and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues. Working toward practical solutions that benefit both employer and employee, JAN helps people with disabilities enhance their employability, and shows employers how to capitalize on the value and talent that people with disabilities add to the workplace. JAN is funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy.

<http://askjan.org/>

Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology (PEAT)

PEAT is a new national resource to facilitate and promote the use of accessible technology in the hiring, employment, retention, and career advancement of individuals with disabilities. PEAT is funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's DOL Office of Disability Employment Policy.

<http://www.peatworks.org/>

Federal and State Laws and Regulations

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) entitles eligible employees of covered employers to take unpaid, job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons with continuation of group health insurance coverage under the same terms and conditions as if the employee had not taken leave.

<http://www.dol.gov/whd/fmla/>

Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in employment, transportation, public accommodation, communications, and governmental activities. The ADA also establishes requirements for telecommunications relay services.

<http://www.dol.gov/dol/topic/disability/ada.htm>

Office of Workers Compensation Programs (OWCP)

The U.S. Department of Labor's OWCP administers the major disability compensation programs which provides to federal workers (or their dependents) who are injured at work or acquire an occupational disease.

<http://www.dol.gov/dol/topic/workcomp/>

Other Resources

Employer Assistance and Resource Network (EARN)

EARN is a service funded by ODEP. EARN's mission is "to empower employers to source, hire, retain and advance qualified individuals with disabilities through dissemination, collaboration, and technical assistance." EARN also researches and promotes promising employer-focused disability practices and policies.

<http://askearn.org/>

U.S. Department of Labor's DOL Employment and Training Administration Older Worker Initiative

In May 2006, the Department of Labor convened an interagency taskforce to focus on the aging of the American workforce and the impact of this demographic change. The Taskforce on the Aging of the American Workforce is identifying strategies to enhance the ability of older Americans to remain in or re-enter the labor market and pursue self-employment opportunities and enable businesses to take full advantage of this skilled labor pool.

http://www.doleta.gov/reports/dpld_older_worker.cfm

Disability.gov

Disability.gov is a federal website that connects people with disabilities, their families, and the organizations that serve them to important resources. The employment section contains useful information and links for businesses on accommodations, laws and regulations, recruitment, and more.

<https://www.disability.gov/>

National Council on Aging

The National Council on Aging (NCOA) is the nation's leading nonprofit service and advocacy organization representing older adults and the community organizations that serve them. NCOA's goal is to improve the health and economic security of 10 million older adults by 2020. NCOA offers resources for mature workers and for employers seeking to hire mature workers.

<http://www.ncoa.org/>

Disability Management Employer Coalition (DMEC)

DMEC is an employer based nonprofit organization to advance the development of integrated disability, absence and productivity management processes in all disability-related employer programs; it is governed by a National Board. DMEC provides its membership a forum to discuss methods and procedures for program implementation through chapter meetings, seminars, virtual education forums, written materials and professional development courses.

*membership required to view DMEC resources

<http://dmec.org/>

Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) - HR Topics and Strategy: Benefits

Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) is the world's largest HR membership organization devoted to human resource management. SHRM is the leading provider of resources to serve the needs of HR professionals and advance the professional practice of human resource management. SHRM offers a wealth of resources for employers and HR professionals on a wide range employee programs and services.

*membership required to view SHRM resources

<http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/benefits>