



Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW) Transition Back to Work National Online Dialogue

**April 3, 2017 – April 21, 2017
Final Report**



S@W/R2W
Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work
POLICY COLLABORATIVE

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Introduction

ePolicyWorks has created a thriving online community through which the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW) Policy Collaborative is hosting a series of online dialogues. These dialogues serve as a means of gathering input and ideas to inform the work of a SAW/RTW Policy Working Group as they develop policy recommendations, as well as resources and materials to assist states and other key stakeholders in improving services to injured or disabled workers.

The following report outlines the results of latest ePolicyWorks dialogue in the SAW/RTW series, "[Transition Back to Work](#)." This virtual effort, held from April 3, 2017 – April 21, 2017, invited current members of the online community, along with members of the general public and key stakeholders including insurers, providers, state agencies, employers, researchers, program administrators, advocates, and policymakers to share insight on what it would take for states to develop initiatives or programs, or institute policy changes, that support workers in the transition back to work.

The Transition Back to Work dialogue was divided into the following two topics:

1. Partial return-to-work
2. Employer subsidies and incentives

Participants were asked to submit their ideas based on these topics, keeping the following questions in mind:

- What kinds of policy changes would be needed?
- Who are the key players that would need to be convinced to act?
- What kind of incentives might they require?
- Are there any strategies you can think of that don't require direct financial payments to stakeholders in the RTW sphere, such as training opportunities, awareness campaigns, etc.?
- What kinds of supports, resources or materials would be helpful for addressing their concerns and overcoming barriers?

The multitude of ideas gathered from this dialogue illustrate that collaboration and crowdsourcing with key stakeholders are imperative for the advancement and development of best practices to support inclusive employment for people with disabilities. Results of this online event will play an important role in shaping the policies and best practices for transitioning back to work.

Included in this report is information about dialogue participants, outreach conducted during the dialogue, and top ideas contributed and voted on by participants. The results of all the recent SAW/RTW Policy Collaborative's dialogues can be found at the SAW/RTW ePolicyWorks community page - SAW-RTW.ePolicyWorks.org.

Note: The following section outlines the key metrics from the online dialogue and provides a snapshot of the participation results.

Dialogue Participation Summary

- Dialogue opened on Monday, April 3, 2017 at 8:00 am ET
- Dialogue closed on Friday, April 21, 2017 at 11:59 pm ET

- Total Unique Visitors during the dialogue: 668
- Total SAW/RTW Community Members: 189
- Total New SAW/RTW Community Members registering during the dialogue: 79
- Active Community Members during the dialogue: 34 (submitted ideas, voted or commented on either topic)

Partial return-to-work

- Total Ideas: 20
- Total Comments: 153
- Total Votes: 133

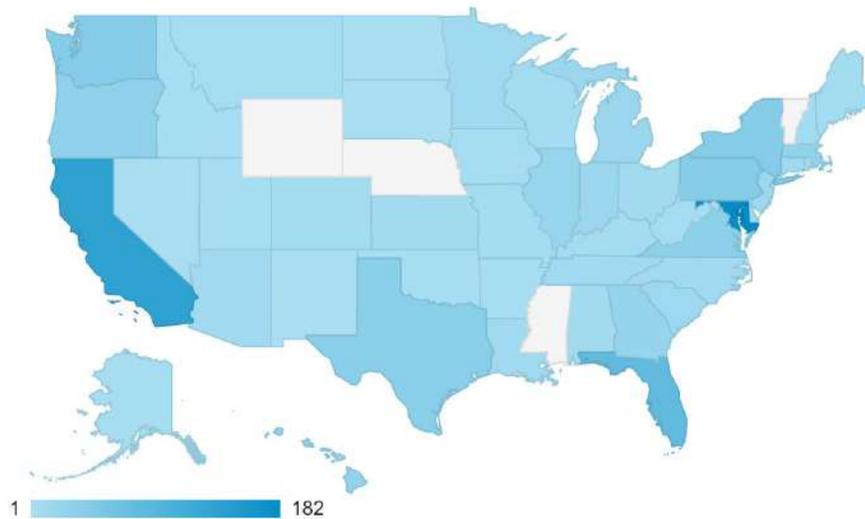
Employer subsidies and incentives

- Total Ideas: 10
- Total Comments: 34
- Total Votes: 54

Visits during the Dialogue (4/3/17 – 4/21/17)

- Total visits: 1,106
- Unique visitors: 668
- Total page views: 5,585
- Average pages per visit: 4.81
- Average visit duration: 6:23
- Returning visitors: 52.07%
- Bounce rate (percentage of participants who leave after viewing the first page of the dialogue): 43.79%

Map of Demographics of United States Visits



Outreach and Registration Metrics

In order to engage a broad range of participants in the ePolicyWorks online dialogues, our team engages in a multitude of strategic outreach efforts, including emails and social media posts. Email blasts are sent to previous ePolicyWorks dialogue participants and key stakeholders in the current dialogue topics. Our outreach strategy is critical to informing and shaping the conversation in every online dialogue, ensuring that the right people are brought to the table to contribute.

Total Dialogue Outreach Emails

- Email Blasts – 7
- Emails Delivered – 13,877
- Emails Opened – 2,966 (21.37% open rate)
- Total number of clicks on links in emails (excluding multiple clicks of the same link) – 328

Total Tweets

- Tweets pointing to SAW/RTW Policy Collaborative homepage – 9
- Tweets pointing to Topic 1: Partial Return-to-Work – 8
- Tweets pointing to Topic 2: Employer Subsidies and Incentives – 8
- Direct Tweets to targeted individuals and organizations – 36

Registration Information

In order to join the community and participate in the dialogue, registrants were asked to answer a series of questions. Detailed answers are included in the spreadsheets attached to the report.

Infographics Depicting Popular Ideas Contributed by Dialogue Participants

Topic 1: Partial Return-to-work



Employer education

The increasing numbers of individuals with disabilities and older workers in the workforce may call for changes to ensure that their desire to transition back to work following illness or injury does not turn into a situation where workers are discouraged from returning to work because of bias related to age or disability. Employer education can focus on the business case for retaining these workers and assuring that they are not discouraged from returning to work.



Provide ex. of model partial disability & partial RTW programs

Convincing employers, insurers and other stakeholders to implement partial disability and partial return-to-work strategies could be helped by providing examples of successful programs that offer evidence of improvements in return to work outcomes. For example, Rhode Island's Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) Partial Return to Work Program is considered a model program for assisting workers in transitioning back to work gradually. The Partial Return to Work Program allows an individual collecting TDI to continue collecting their partial disability payments when they return to work part-time. In this way, they can recover their ability to function gradually, build up their strength if necessary, and work up to being able to work their normal number of hours without entirely ending their TDI benefits. (See <http://www.dlt.ri.gov/tdi/tdiPartial.htm>.)





Social Worker

I have worked with some individuals where the need for ongoing quality and affordable health care and the fear of not being able to secure it once going back to work is the main obstacle that prevents individuals from securing sustainable employment. If this concern could be further minimized, we would see a positive impact.



Accommodations for mental/behavioral health disabilities

Increased recognition of employment-affecting conditions such as depression or other mental health disabilities may result in more situations where workplace accommodations that are different from the physical accommodations most employers are familiar with may be needed so that workers with these conditions can transition back to work.



IL Director

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Topic 2: Employer subsidies and incentives



1

Provide examples of model employer subsidy & incentive program

Convincing employers, insurers and other stakeholders to implement employer subsidy and incentive programs could be helped by providing examples of successful programs that offer evidence of improvements in return to work outcomes. For example, Oregon's Preferred Worker Program (PWP), for workers who are unable to return to work because of permanent work restrictions or disability from an on-the-job injury, is considered a model program for assisting workers in transitioning back to work. PWP will pay the employer of a preferred worker a wage subsidy of 50% of the worker's wages for 183 days. In addition, PWP will provide the employer with incentive funds for worksite modifications/ PWP will also cover the cost to the worker of finding, accepting, or keeping a job in Oregon, such as tools and equipment, uniforms or clothing required for the job, and required licensing or certification.

(See <http://wcd.oregon.gov/rtw/Pages/pwp.aspx>.)



2

Encourage employers to embrace RTW as standard business practice

Financial incentives, in combination with employer education, can go a long way to convincing employers of the value of facilitating return to work for workers who may not be able to return to their former productivity, or who require accommodations that may cost more than the employer wishes to pay.





Reinforce with policymakers that returning workers contribute

A wide range of federal, state, and local agencies and policymakers have a clear interest in RTW, which, from their perspective, is of overall benefit to society. Providing subsidies and incentives to employers can be a cost-effective way to ensure that skilled and trained workers remain in the workforce or return to work as soon as possible.



No safety net for Employees

If you have been injured, your first instinct or at least it should be, is to get better and get back to work. So you feel like you can go back to work and tell the Doc who releases you, only to find that you are struggling to get through the day. So you went back to work too early. Now what? Workers comp will not continue benefits because you went back unless you file a new claim for a new injury.

Good intentioned Workers are harmed by a flawed system, they have no safety net. We need to fix this first. For those who misuse the system, we must have a way to fix that too.





Partner with emerging services

On growing trend is the offer to delivery of groceries to home for a fee, and often that fee is smaller than what it would take in gas to go pick up the groceries. These things are life-savers for the homebound. In the particular case of the temporarily disabled, employers could definitely partner with local groceries that also carry pharmacies, and have necessary drugs delivered as a benefit to the employee.

For example, certain states won't cover transportation for Pharmacy pick-up.

Source: <http://kff.org/medicaid/state-indicator/non-emergency-medical-transportation-services/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colld%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>

But online delivery could be an easy supplement to services.

Examples:

shipt.com/tampa-grocery-delivery

shop.safeway.com/ecom/home

www.instacart.com/publix

grocery.walmart.com/usd-estore/m/home/anonymouslanding.jsp

This also would strengthen employer businesses between them as a partnership.



Conclusion

Through the Transition Back to Work National Online Dialogue, ODEP's Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW) Policy Collaborative successfully leveraged leading-edge crowdsourcing tools to engage individuals and organizations interested in efforts to build a more disability-inclusive workforce in a virtual conversation on ideas for effective disability-inclusive recruitment strategies.

In summary, the online event attracted more than 650 visitors, of which 72 participated posting 30 unique ideas, 187 comments and 187 votes. This metrics report provides a summary of the online dialogue's results, and the input and responses of the participants are now being analyzed in an effort to inform the efforts of a Policy Working Group to develop resources and materials to assist states and other key stakeholders in improving services to injured workers.