

The RETAIN Initiative

Jennifer Sheehy, Deputy Assistant Secretary
U.S. DOL, Office of Disability Employment Policy



RETAIN

Retaining Employment and Talent
After Injury/Illness Network





About ODEP

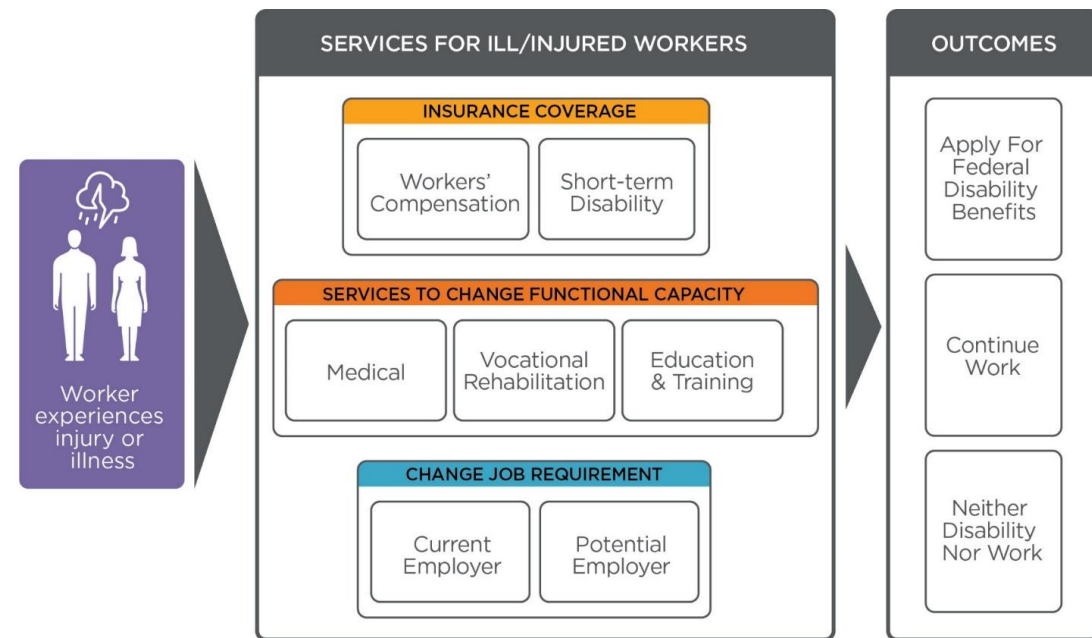
- Only non-regulatory Federal agency that promotes policies and coordinates with employers and all levels of government to increase workplace success for people with disabilities
 - Our mission: To develop and influence policies that increase the number and quality of employment opportunities for people with disabilities
-

Scope of the Need

- In 2023, there were 3.2 million nonfatal *occupational* injuries and illnesses, and approximately 1.8 million involved days away from work, job restriction, or transfer.
- Estimates suggest between 2.4% and 4% of the workforce experience a work-limiting injury or illness (*occupational or non-occupational*)
 - In 2023, this equates to between 3.9 million and 6.4 million workers.
- Millions of workers leave the labor force, at least temporarily, and many turn to public programs such as Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).

No coordinated service delivery system to help injured/ill workers remain in the workforce

- Navigating multiple, complicated systems increases opportunities to fall through cracks
- Each stakeholder has own goals and incentives - not always aligned with goal of keeping person employed
- *Health care providers are often not trained in occupational health best practices and may not think of work as a positive “health” outcome*



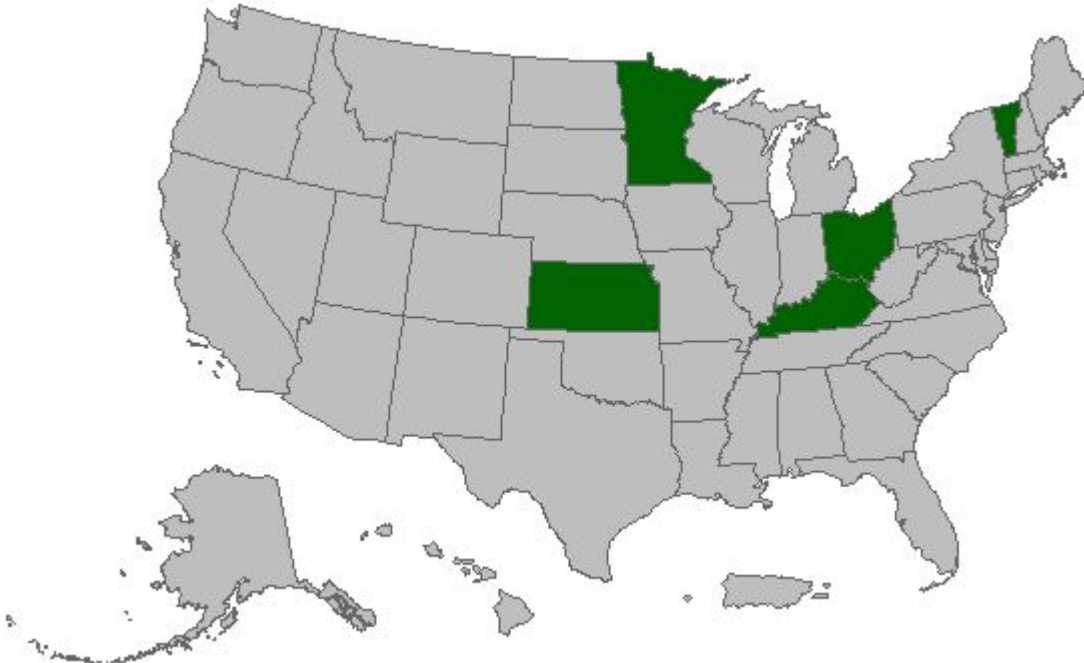
The Consequences

- **On individuals:** Adverse effects on health, family finances, and quality of life; risk of permanent unemployment and poverty
- **On employers:** Direct and indirect costs from loss of valuable employees
- **On federal and state government:** Costly disability and health benefits
- **On economy:** Reduction in tax base, decreased economic activity
- **Improving the employment outcomes of newly injured and ill workers benefits all stakeholders**

RETAIN

Retaining Employment and Talent After Injury/Illness Network

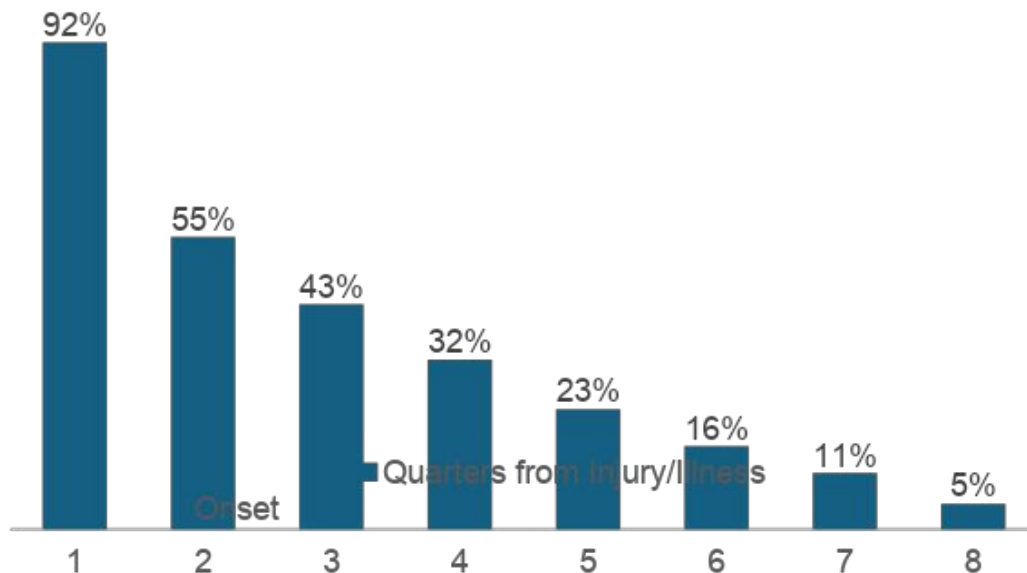
- Joint initiative led by DOL-ODEP in partnership with DOL-ETA & SSA
- 5 states developed programs:
 - KS, KY, OH, MN, VT



- RETAIN provides early coordination of health care and employment services through an integrated network of partners
- Goals:
 - Improve employment outcomes of newly injured or ill workers and reduce the need for SSDI and SSI
 - Develop evidence on the effectiveness of early intervention SAW/RTW efforts
- Modeled after Washington State's COHEs
 - Broader target population and services

RETAIN is enrolling individuals within 12 weeks of work disability onset

Probability of Returning to Work in 8 Quarter Period if Not Returned in Prior Quarter



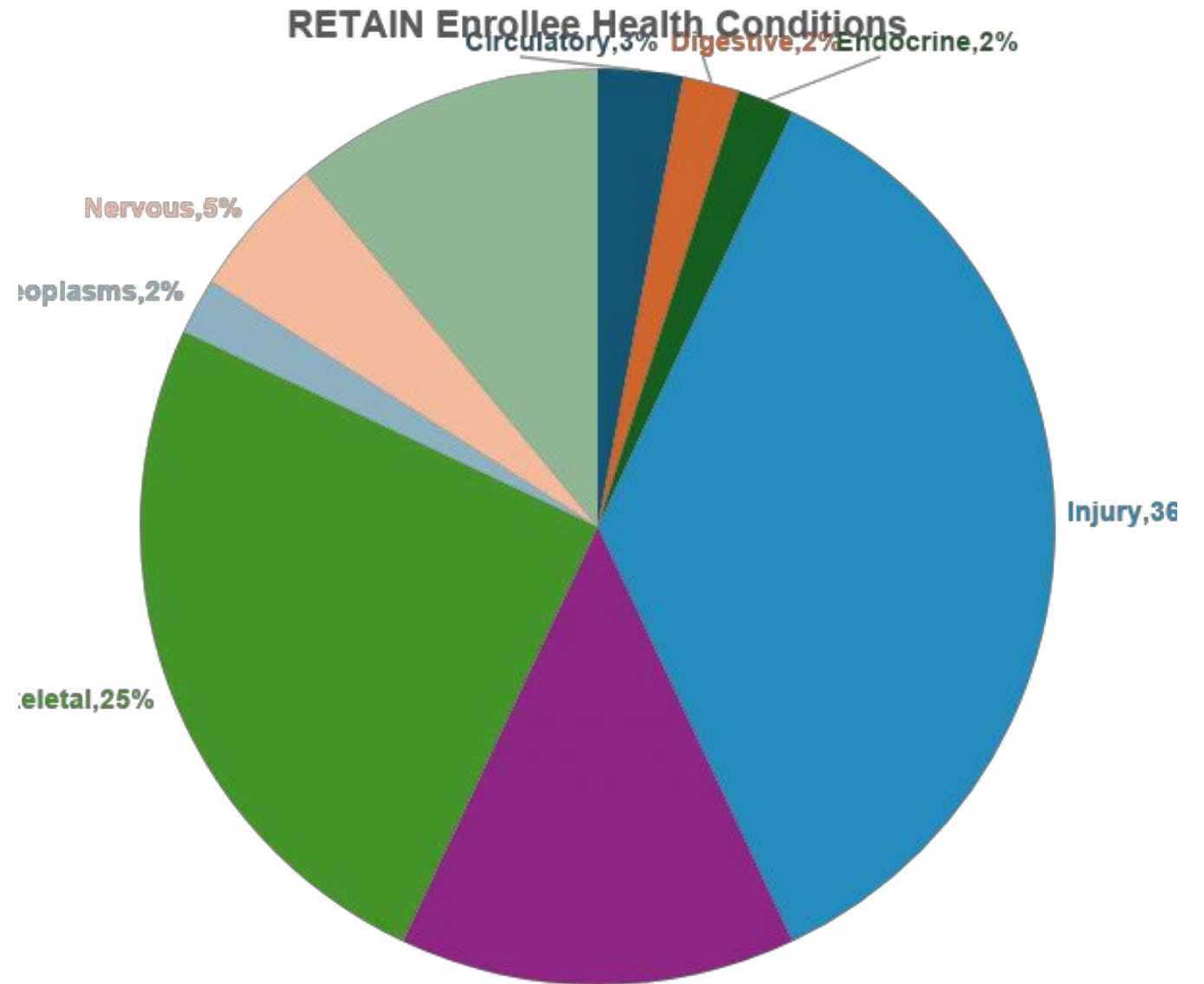
Source: Washington State Department of Labor and Industries, 2013

- Based on evidence that the probability of returning to work after missing 12 weeks of work drops dramatically
- Effective services for people out of work for extended periods may differ from RETAIN services
- RETAIN enrollees must be in the labor force at the time of work disability onset and have not applied for or received SSDI or SSI

Key Services in RETAIN

- RTW Coordinators coordinating health and employment services
- Training health care providers in occupational health best practices, including alternatives to opioids for pain management
- Incentivizing health care providers to utilize the best practices
- Early communication to all stakeholders
- Work-place based interventions (including accommodations such as lighter and/or modified duties)
- Retraining/rehabilitation for workers who can no longer perform their prior job
- Tracking and monitoring participant progress

RETAIN Targeting People with MSKs and Mental Health Conditions



State Program Partners and Characteristics

Program	Key partners	Service area, eligible population, and referral sources
RETAINWORK S Kansas	Lead agency: Kansas Department of Commerce	Service area: Entire state (105 counties in five local workforce development areas)
	Healthcare partners: Ascension Via Christi, Stormont Vail Healthcare, University of Kansas Medical Center, Kansas Clinical Improvement Collaborative	Eligible population: Adults who are employed or seeking employment and have a work- or non-work-related injury or illness
	Workforce partners: All five local workforce development boards in Kansas, Kansas Business Group on Health, Kansas Society for Human Resource Management	Referral sources: EMR reports, medical providers, local workforce development area staff, employers, self-referrals
RETAIN Kentucky	Lead agency: Kentucky Department of Workforce Investment, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation	Service area: Entire state (120 counties)
	Healthcare partners: University of Kentucky HealthCare, University of Louisville Health	Eligible population: Adults who are employed or seeking employment and have a non-work-related injury or illness
	Workforce partners: University of Kentucky Human Development Institute, Council of State Governments, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce	Referral sources: Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, targeted online advertising, healthcare partners, workforce partners, employers, self-referrals

State Program Partners and Characteristics

Program	Key partners	Service area, eligible population, and referral sources
Minnesota RETAIN	Lead agency: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development	Service area: Entire state (87 counties)
	Healthcare partners: Mayo Clinic, HealthPartners TRIA	Eligible population: Adults who are employed or seeking employment and have a work- or non-work-related injury or illness
	Workforce partners: Workforce Development, Inc.	Referral sources: EMR reports, mass email campaigns to Mayo Clinic patients, targeted online advertising, medical providers, employers, self-referrals
Ohio RETAIN	Lead agency: Ohio Department of Job and Family Services	Service area: Three regions in Ohio, encompassing the cities of Youngstown, Toledo, and Cincinnati
	Healthcare partners: Bon Secours Mercy Health	Eligible population: Adults who are employed or seeking employment and have a non-work-related injury or illness
	Workforce partners: Local workforce development boards, Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities, Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation	Referral sources: EMR reports, medical providers, employers, self-referrals
Vermont RETAIN	Lead agency: Vermont Department of Labor	Service area: Entire state (14 counties)
	Healthcare partners: Dartmouth Health, OneCare Vermont	Eligible population: Adults who are employed or seeking employment and have a non-work-related injury or illness
	Workforce partners: HireAbility Vermont, Invest EAP	Referral sources: Self-referrals through web-based pre-screeners

RETAIN Program Unique Accomplishments

Program	Accomplishment
RETAINWORKS Kansas	Served a largely rural population and developed innovative approaches to reach people where they are by developing a robust self-referral system.
RETAIN Kentucky	Developed peer mentoring program component to serve workers and made efforts to serve people in Appalachian counties. Will continue to provide RETAIN services through KY's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation after the grant period ends.
Minnesota RETAIN	Succeeded in passing a legislative change altering the state's definition of dislocated worker so that state funding may be used to serve workers who experienced an off-the-job injury or illness whose continued employment is at risk.
Ohio RETAIN	Developed a robust network of employer partners and Mercy Health is developing a sustainability program to continue operations after the grant period ends.
Vermont RETAIN	Created mental health screening tools for physicians and RTW coordinators and is developing a way to identify workers throughout the state who may be at risk of dropping out of the workforce after an injury or illness.



Advice from RETAIN Programs

- Understand the community landscape of RTW resources and unmet needs
- Engage early and often
- Provide holistic, whole-person supports
- Reach people where they are
- Strong case management
- Focus on why people can work rather than cannot work



Thank You

- Jennifer Sheehy – sheehy.jennifer.c@dol.gov
 - Brian Walsh = walsh.brian@dol.gov
 - Chris McLaren – mclaren.christopher.f@dol.gov
-