

EU Report Describes Keys to Optimal and Effective RTW Interventions



The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work released a report designed to provide an up-to-date summary of knowledge regarding vocational rehabilitation and return-to-work (RTW) systems, programmes and interventions.

The review concluded that optimal RTW interventions should include the following factors:

- Early healthcare interventions
- Reassurance and encouragement by healthcare professionals during the acute phase of disability
- Early contact between employer and employee
- Good communication and collaboration among all stakeholders
- Multidisciplinary rehabilitation, that is, the application of the biopsychosocial approach, addressing health, individual factors and workplace factors, in situations of long-term sickness absence
- A combination of clinical interventions and workplace components.

In addition, the report found that effective RTW interventions would be facilitated by:

- The integration of work outcomes as key measures in primary healthcare
- The education of healthcare professionals on effective RTW interventions
- A paradigm shift towards the use of the 'fit note,' with relevant guidance and training provided for healthcare professionals
- The inclusion of work outcomes in health policies, clinical guidelines, research and audits to reinforce the importance of vocational rehabilitation to full health
- The standardization of disability definitions and assessment systems
- The establishment of clear systems and strategies for effective communication and cooperation among stakeholders
- Clearly defined incentives for all stakeholders
- The integration of vocational rehabilitation into organizational health and well-being strategies, as well as broader government policies on occupational health and employment

- The education of employers on proactive approaches to RTW interventions
- The sharing of good workplace practices for and approaches to RTW.

The OHS Insider has many articles, resources and tools on return to work, including:

- Why monitoring is key to implementing a successful RTW program
- How to Comply with RTW Requirements
- The Role of Co-Workers in a Successful RTW Program
- Model Return to Work Plan
- Model Return to Work Closure Report
- Recorded webinar on accommodating returning workers
- Using Supervisors to Improve the Return-to-Work Process, Part 1 and Part 2.