

EMPLOYERS GETTING STARTED
On the Road to Mental Health and Productivity

MODULE SIX

ROADMAP FOR COGNITIVE AND SENSORY DISABILITY MANAGEMENT

Highlights

Module Six:

- Contains an original roadmap by Watson Wyatt Worldwide to guide managers in the return to work of employees with disabilities affecting cognitive and sensory capacities.
- Draws on Watson Wyatt’s four pillars of engagement for this purpose:
 - Alignment (employee knows what to do)
 - Capability (skill requirements and modified work)
 - Resources (tools to do the job)
 - Motivation (employee encouraged/supported to succeed)
- Provides managers with a play-by-play description of what they must do to oversee and, in some aspects, hands-on management of the return to work process:
 - Make sure that once back on the job, the employee is not stretched too far.
 - Are expectations of the employee clear to him/her and you?
 - Noticed changes in behaviour.
 - How to handle relapse.
 - Talking to co-workers about the job modifications needed.
 - The process of interviewing the employee who is returning to work.
 - Create a “clean slate” performance record. This is smart and appropriate.

Roadmap for Cognitive and Sensory Disability Management
(Watson Wyatt Worldwide Model)

Further to the “Quarterbacking” Module, we introduce this specific roadmap to the “return to work” phase of mental disability management.

“*Cognitive*” refers to brain capacity for thought and understanding which can be impaired by brain-based disorders including depression and anxiety disorders.

We wish to express our sincerest appreciation to Colleen McKinnell, Senior Consultant, Watson Wyatt Group Benefits and Health Care Practice, and colleagues for this design and continued efforts to make mental health an integral part of corporate business and health policies.

Four Pillars

The Cognitive and Sensory Model is based on Watson Wyatt's "Productive Engagement Model" and specifies questions that should be considered when an employee returns to work from mental disability.

Alignment (returning employees know what to do)

- Have goals and expectations for the modified role been developed and communicated to the employee and to co-workers?

Capability (returning employees will meet the skill requirements of the modified work they are returning to)

- Has the pre-leave job been assessed against the medical restrictions the employee must observe?
- Have appropriate modified duties been developed (for the pre-leave job or another job)?
- Has a plan been established to review periodically those modified duties? Should they continue or be further re-worked?
- Are the goals set for the returning employee realistic?

Resources (the returning employee has the tools needed to do the job)

- Are special tools required for individuals to be successful? If so, are they in place?
- Is workload manageable in relation to the individual's restrictions and capabilities?
- Has a support system been put into place? A buddy system is a good idea.

Motivation (the returning employee is encouraged, supported and wants to do a good job)

- Has the returning employee been shown empathy, concern and support?

- Have milestones for the return to work been established, understood and activated?
- Has an arrangement been made for frequent feedback?
- Have pre-leave performance issues been “wiped clean”?

Managerial Responsibility

Lower job stress in the work environment:

- Determine if employees are stretched too far.
- Determine if roles and expectations are unclear to them.
- Determine what tools to do the job of the returning employee are needed or lacking. (This includes information, budgets, technical and people resources)
- Provide constructive feedback and (when the opportunity presents itself) – recognition.

Be aware of your (returning) employee’s wellbeing. Notice changes in behaviour and attitudes. HR Managers: educate your leaders and managers along these lines:

- Responsibilities under human rights.
- Obligations of performance management.
- Awareness of mental disorders and what chronic stress is and is not.
- Information on behavioural changes and signs – how to respect.

How to handle relapse (notification of extended absence)

- Express empathy and concern.
- Has the individual seen a doctor; how long does the doctor say the additional time away will be?
- Advise that you will be sending paperwork the physician will need to fill out.

Managers managing the return to work process itself:

- Conduct team meeting and brief co-workers on the employee’s return.
- Do not talk about limitations. Talk about “the job” and getting back in the saddle.

- Brief co-workers (briefly) on the modified duties and make it clear this job accommodation process is both smart and necessary.
- Ensure no single person or group bears the lion's share of the work transfer necessitated by the job accommodation process.
- Interview the returning employee:
 - Welcome back
 - Update on the company
 - Review the job/modified duties
 - Invite the case manager to come in
 - Discuss accommodation requirements
 - Set dates and times for reviewing progress and problems
 - Make a two-way "feedback understanding." This is absolutely key.
- Express personal support and also, in that context, establish the clear principle that the objective – the necessity – is that employee's return to full-time employment.
- Create a "clean slate" performance record. This is smart and appropriate.

Proceed to the Watson Wyatt Worldwide Job Analysis Work sheet at
www.mentalhealthroundtable.ca