

Using Research to Improve Work Reintegration Outcomes

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Background

- **WSIB funds occupational health & safety research**
 - **Institute for Work & Health (IWH)**
 - **Research Advisory Council (RAC)**
 - **Centres of Research Expertise**
 - **Other**
- **Organizational interest in evidence based policy, practice and decision making**

The Return to Work Problem

- **Steady deterioration of Return to Work outcomes over a decade**
- **Significant increase in case duration and costs**
- **Unhappy stakeholders**

Strategy

- **New Service Delivery Model**
 - **structure**
 - **redesigned roles**
 - greater frontline specialization, focus and expertise
 - increased capacity to provide RTW assistance in the workplace
 - **process**
 - **practice**
 - increased personal communication & information gathering
 - timely decision making
 - earlier intervention in RTW & health care treatment
- **Focus case management approaches and interventions for WSIB case managers, RTW co-ordinators, and nurses to RTW process and outcomes**
- **Adopt and adapt the work disability prevention paradigm (Loisel)**

Collaborating with Researchers

- **Identified who could and would participate**
- **Created a “table” for collaboration**
- **Levelled on our thoughts and interests**
- **Began with a practical draft tool**
 - **are we interpreting the research as the researcher intended?**
 - **are we translating the research correctly?**
- **Feedback and refinement**
- **Moved on to next item of interest/concern to us**

Challenges

- **Some parties vested in paradigms**
- **Tension between theory and practicality**
- **Balance between ideal solution and ability of staff**
- **Introducing fundamental change driven by research**
- **Mapping risk factors to effective interventions**
 - **more known about one than the other, especially when multiple risk factors are present**

Key Success Factors

- **Leveraging existing relationships with researchers**
 - **research advisory groups**
 - **IWH Plenary Sessions**
 - **expert forums**
 - **Lunch & learn sessions**
 - **topic specific teleconferences**
- **Having done our homework on the literature**
- **Investing time to understand each other**
- **Senior level support – both “sides”**
- **Exposing the developers and users of the tools to the researchers**

Insights and Surprises

- **Researchers were thrilled to be asked**
- **Researchers who are also practitioners are particularly effective at bridging research and practice – high credibility**
- **Researchers moved us away from a desire to construct highly controlled interventions**
- **Simplicity of some of the tools astonished staff**
- **Greater confidence in the soundness of tools and interventions**

Has It Worked?

- **For the 1st in a decade, RTW outcomes have improved**
- **For the 1st time in decade, case duration has declined at the 3 month and 6 month milestones**
- **We are encouraged, optimistic, and continuing to use research to build strategy and practice**
 - **work reintegration**
 - **healthcare, for example, narcotic use**