

# RETAIN CONNECTICUT

Retaining  
Employment  
and Talent After  
Injury/Illness  
Network



*In partnership with UConn and CT DOL for worker's health*

Issue 8 | June 15, 2021

## Enrollments now over 100 and closer to goal

Dear providers and office staff –

Congratulations to all who have helped achieve this mile marker. 101 patients have been enrolled and more than half have been served by our RTW Navigators and the RETAIN-CT team. There are two weeks remaining to reach the June 30 goal of 120 participants however we are pleased to announce that **enrollment forms will now be accepted through the end of September**. If you are a provider enrolling your first patient into the RETAIN program for support services provided by our RTW Navigator Team, please contact Janet (contact information below) for assistance.

In this month's issue we introduce you to another member of the RETAIN-CT case management team, Bilaugn Florius. Bilaugn is a vocational rehabilitation (VR) services counselor coordinator in the Department of Aging and Disability Services' Workers Rehabilitation Services program. Also, in this issue, Dr. Bill Shaw shares a simple procedure to help elicit RTW conversations with patients.

## **When the injury/pain is disabling, vocational rehabilitation services help workers.**

Whether a serious injury happens on the job or at home, the worker is left physically or mentally disabled. Although the patient's life course and employment options are changed, there is help available.

Bilaugn Florius is a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Coordinator from the Workers Rehabilitation Services, a division of the Connecticut State Department of Aging and Disability Services. Ms. Florius has a MS degree in Professional Counseling and is a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor as well. She first began working for the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services in 2012 before obtaining her current position with Workers Rehabilitation Services in 2018. Ms. Florius serves as a consultant with the RETAIN-CT Case Management team.



**Bilaugn Florius, MS,**  
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Coordinator  
from Workers Rehabilitation Services,  
a division of the CT State Dept of Aging and  
Disability Services

During case assessment meetings with RETAIN-CT, Ms. Florius may suggest individualized employment services to help the participant stay-at-work or return-to-work and to achieve job goals. Once a worker enters the RETAIN-CT Work Navigator process, they are assessed for a referral into one of the vocational rehabilitation (VR) programs including Workers Rehabilitation Services or the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services.

Workers Rehab Services (WRS) is only available to Workers Comp recipients.

WRS may offer injured workers vocational counseling; an evaluation; an aptitude/interest test; formal training/education; job seeking skills or job placement assistance.

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) is accessible to all workers and non-workers with a disability, except for those who have visual impairments, for which there is a different program. BRS offers a full range of services

including: vocational counseling; benefits counseling; job search assistance; school-to-work transition services; skills training and career education in college or vocational schools; on-the-job training in business and industry; assistive technology services; vehicle and home modification; supported employment services; services to help restore physical/mental impairment; and support with accessing other programs.

We are delighted to have Bilaugn Florius on the RETAIN-CT team. The feeling is reciprocal according to Ms. Florius. *“What has been (or is) most gratifying working on this project has been the ability to develop, build and strengthen closer relationships with our partners and providers. This has allowed for the sharing of information that we may otherwise not have had easy access to, better understanding of services and resources available, and **has allowed for the ability to provide better wrap around services for injured workers** in need of assistance with maintaining or re-entering employment.”*

For more information about either VR service, please view the links below.

<https://portal.ct.gov/AgingandDisability/Content-Pages/Bureaus/Bureau-of-Rehabilitation-Services>

<https://portal.ct.gov/AgingandDisability/Content-Pages/Programs/Workers-Rehabilitation-Program>

## FROM DR. BILL SHAW

### **And now tell me about your work...**

Remember that occupational titles and job descriptions seldom provide the information you need to anticipate potential workplace barriers to return to work/stay at work. As part of the RETAIN-CT program, we recommend that clinicians routinely incorporate workplace questions into patient interviewing. Some suggestions that have been shared by RETAIN-CT providers are listed below:

- **Any specific concerns you have about returning to work or staying at work?**
- **Are there specific job tasks that might be difficult to resume?**
- **Are there ways that you can alter your work to help alleviate pain?**
- **What kind of help might be available from your supervisor and co-workers?**
- **Have you discussed any tentative RTW/SAW plans with your employer?**

A brief conversation with your patient about workplace concerns might help to tailor work restrictions or identify problem tasks or job demands that could be highlighted by you in a brief comment on the form or letter you use to communicate information about work status, restrictions or modifications. Issues of organizational support, peer relationships, job tenure, flexibility of job tasks, and job control are all factors that have been associated with disability duration and failed RTW efforts, so ignoring these potential sources of disability may lead to poorer work outcomes for your patients.

## ECHO UPDATE

### RETAIN-CT Project ECHO

RETAIN Connecticut hosted its fifth Project ECHO session with 15 participants on June 10th. Project ECHO is a defined strategy to foster peer communication on specialty topics across clinical disciplines. The topic of June's session was "Return to Work During Post-Acute COVID-19 Illness

(Long COVID)", presented by Tom Winters, MD, FACOEM, FACPM and Lee Okurowski, MD, MPH, MBA. Dr. Winters reviewed the most common symptoms of "long" COVID, or those who have post-acute symptoms that develop during or after COVID-19, continue for over 12 weeks, and cannot be explained by alternative diagnosis. He also shared screening tools to detect function and strategies for supporting these patients to cope with chronic illness. Return to Work for these patients is case by case, and most helpful for them is a community of providers encouraging a proper positive mental and physical return to work, including opportunities for accommodations. Dr. Okurowski presented a case on a patient with shoulder pain and immobility following both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. He also led a group discussion on the symptoms being seen in healthcare workers and the psycho-social supports they may need to treat both their musculoskeletal complaints as well as their burnout.



This Project ECHO series consists of monthly meetings with participating RETAIN-CT providers. The topic for the next ECHO session is **Ergonomic Interventions to Assist Return to Work**. If you are interested in joining this ECHO session, please contact Dr. Michael Erdil at [erdil@uchc.edu](mailto:erdil@uchc.edu).

## OUTREACH CORNER

**If you have any questions or need assistance recruiting a patient, please contact Janet at 860-697-6389, [caldwellcover@uchc.edu](mailto:caldwellcover@uchc.edu)**

**Thank you to all of our providers and staff for your support.**

**Dr William Shaw, UConn Health, RETAIN-CT Project Director**

**Karen Quesnel, CT Department of Labor, RETAIN-CT Project Lead**

**Questions or referrals to interested providers?  
Please email us  
at [caldwellcover@uchc.edu](mailto:caldwellcover@uchc.edu) or [wshaw@uchc.edu](mailto:wshaw@uchc.edu).**

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