



Return-to-work Outcomes for Federal Employees in the Office of Workers' Compensation Disability Management Program

SUMMARY

In 2018, the Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) partnered with the [Office of Workers' Compensation Programs](#) (OWCP) and funded contractor Summit Consulting to conduct *Return-to-Work Outcomes for Federal Employees in the Office of Workers' Compensation Disability Management Program*. This descriptive and statistical analysis aims to understand what factors are associated with disabled workers returning to work and to examine the timing of disability management services on injured workers' return-to-work outcomes and disability management duration. Researchers used 17 years of administrative case management data (February 2001—November 2017) to identify relevant trends.

The [Federal Employees' Compensation Program](#) (FECP), managed by OWCP, supports civilian federal employees who experience work-related disability. In cases in which an employee is unable to return to work, they enter the disability management program and receive active recovery assistance from OWCP and their employing agency.

This Department of Labor-funded study was a result of the annual process to determine the Department's research priorities for the upcoming year. It contributes to the labor evidence-base to inform [data and reporting](#) programs and policies and addresses Departmental strategic goals and priorities.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **After their first year in the disability management program, 76% of injured workers returned to work.** Overall, 82% of injured workers returned to work at some point during the disability management program.
- **Injury characteristics and time between adjudication and receipt of disability management services had the strongest associations with favorable outcomes,** that is, return-to-work after a disability management duration under 12 months. For example, traumatic injuries correlated with shorter disability management intervals, while occupational injuries correlated with longer intervals.
- **Nurse services were highly associated with return-to-work events.** More than 50% of injured workers returned to work after receiving nurse services without any additional disability management activities.
- **The large majority of workers (72%) returned within 12 months.** After 18 months, most injured workers either had returned to work (78%) or were unlikely to return in any capacity (2% of workers returned in the 18—30-month timeframe); very few workers (less than 1%) returned to work within the 24—30-month timeframe. These findings suggest that the impact of disability management services on returning to work is minimal during the 24- to 30-month timeframe.



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[SEE FULL STUDY](#)

TIMEFRAME: 2018

PARTNER AGENCY: Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP)

SUBMITTED BY: Summit Consulting

SPONSOR: Chief Evaluation Office

DATE PREPARED: February 2022

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