



## School Districts Leverage Financial Incentives to Create Return-to-Work Culture

As PSESD strives to ensure success for each child by eliminating opportunity gaps, here at the Trust, we also strive to ensure injured worker return-to-work success by removing barriers to that success. PSWCT's Return-to-Work Incentive Program (RTWIP) equips our Trust Members with deeper knowledge of gap-closing return-to-work best practices and provides opportunities for school districts to share with each other how they apply these practices.

It has been exciting to see the RTWIP grow from 8 participants to the current 13 over this last year. For the first 6 months of the program, the Trust paid out \$144,687.24, leaving \$791,727.76 of allocations to roll into this school year. In November, you received your district's allocations and in the coming week, you will receive your balances and the possible claims that may be eligible for reimbursement. To date, we've only paid out \$7,891 in reimbursement allocations. *The Trust has over \$1.7 million dollars that we would like to reimburse back to participating program members and new participants!* The Return-to-Work Incentive Program will be here next year, so it is not too late to join.

To our current participating members, please scan your email over the week for information on how to begin your applications for reimbursement now rather than waiting until the last minute to complete. This money goes back to you to allocate to where it can be best used - for students and staff. To Districts still wanting more information, please contact [Aliza Hauser, Return-to-Work Manager](#) at the Trust. Any of the 13 Districts participating in this program may be contacted also to learn how you too can create a culture of safety and return-to-work.

This [linked study](#) touches on one way to help all our Districts improve their Return-to-Work (RTW) Programs by reducing bias in RTW. The study found that bias in the workplace over how and why a person files a claim correlates directly to the success rate of that worker in their return to work. When RTW partners meet, there is discussion about creating a RTW culture. The thinking around a RTW culture should include taking action to move all workers into a RTW position, whether part time, shared, or alternate duty whenever possible. The research found that biases enter when the employer viewpoint considers the injury, how the injury occurred, and the outcome of the injury. Workers with psychological claims were 69% less likely to have received a phone call, or to have had a RTW plan in place for them than workers suffering physical injuries.

Three takeaways from the article are to:

1. Act early when connecting to any worker with any on the job injury.
2. Employers should consider light duty options for all workers immediately upon release to light duty.
3. The faster a worker is successfully placed in a light duty position, the more likely they will be able to RTW in their job of injury, while the longer an employer waits to return a worker to work, even a light duty assignment, the more likely the worker will stay off work.

"A supervisor's reaction to an injury is likely shaped by the same workplace culture that gave rise to a worker's psychological injury to begin with." Meaning that if that injured worker's supervisor had supported that worker at the time of the incident, things might have gone better from the start.

Learn how your Trust partners with approved RTWIPs brought the incentive program home! Connect with your peers at **Auburn, Bethel, Everett, Federal Way, Franklin Pierce, Mukilteo, PSESD, Puyallup, Skykomish, Steilacoom, Sumner, Tacoma, and White River.**