



On-site consultants help manage employee absence, disability

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Using an on-site consultant is one effective way employers can integrate early disability reporting and disability duration guidelines, according to new research from The Standard.

Research in the company's "The Future of Absence and Disability Management" paper was a continuation of research which examined trends in managing absence and disability by highlighting two health and productivity management practices that the company says are "highly rated by underused by employers."

Having an onsite consultant can create "positive health and productivity outcomes" by maximizing early disability reporting—which involves reporting an employee's absence or disability claim as soon as possible—and disability duration guidelines—which helps predict the anticipated duration of a disability and serve as a standardized method of assessing the effectiveness of a return to work program. Early disability reporting also can work together with a transitional return to work program to help shorten the duration of an absence or disability.

"Ideally, those HPM practices that employers find to be the most effective in meeting their intended goals should be the most widely used," says report author Michael Klachefsky, national practice leader, Workplace Possibilities for The Standard.

But, he says, past employer surveys have suggested otherwise.

"It is important that employers recognize this discrepancy and seek a solution to managing absences and disabilities that integrates such highly rated practices as early disability reporting and disability duration guidelines."

"For years, companies have struggled with three major problems concerning employee absence and productivity," the Standard report says. "For one, employers have trouble managing the several different types of absences, as well as disabilities. Second, many employers have solid programs in place for workers' compensation but not for short- and/or long-term disability. Third, they often lack the proper resources to improve employee health and productivity."

The company noted the on-site consultant model has already proved to be successful. In 2011, The Standard's Workplace Possibilities program saved 81 employers more than \$4.7 million by reducing short-term employee absences by an average of 39 days.

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