



Reintegration Programs – best practice return-to-work

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QEXB5z-gbyA>

https://www.ualberta.ca/rehabilitation/media-library/research/himarc/pdfs/microsoftword-eps_final.pdf

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9092236/>

Overview

The Edmonton Re-integration program began being created in 2009 and delivered in 2015. It is based on evaluation and review evidence, is widely recognised as an innovative, comprehensive, peer-driven return-to-work program for emergency service workers that:

- incorporates elements of peer-support
- features an interactive process of dealing with stressors leading to psychological distress.
- fosters self-efficacy and self-confidence in officers who may be struggling with stigma associated with mental health issues or following a prolonged absence.

Program details

Streams

The program has two variants (streams) that are intended to support members in safely and effectively returning to operational duty. These are:

- a short-term stream for members involved in an officer-involved shooting incidents who are currently reporting PTSI symptoms and;
- a long-term stream for members involved in a wider range of incidents including officer-involved shooting incidents, service vehicle collisions, and other violent scenes who may have been off work and experiencing symptoms of PTSD or other mental health conditions.

Steps

The *short-term stream* runs as follow:

- Prelude (coordinators will attend the scene of an officer-involved shooting whenever possible, and briefly connect with the member, providing information about the program to come)
- Initial meeting to establish trust
- Physical dexterity of firearm
- Acclimatation of gunfire
- Live fire, officer-directed training
- Reintroduction to normal training
- Eventual requalification; and
- Follow-up.

The *long-term stream* runs similarly, but offers additional elements to assist officers who have been off work for an extended period and may:

- provide skill building via training.
- exposure therapy, in coordination with the clinician who may not otherwise have access to organisational-specific conditions key for resolving PTSI symptoms. (e.g., police stations, vehicles, ranges).

Program evaluation

A 2021 review of the program found:

- Short term stream:
 - 100% return to work rate.
 - 89% of participants reported being satisfied or very satisfied satisfaction with the program.



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- Long term stream:
 - The number of days lost due to a PTSI claim dropped considerably after the program began.
 - Those enrolled in the long-term program (n=45) were off work for fewer days than those who were not.
 - 100% of participants reported being satisfied or very satisfied satisfaction with the program.

Evaluations of the program have also found the program led to:

- A shift towards the de-stigmatization of PTSI.
- Those going through reintegration process feeling supported during and after their time in the program. This was beneficial to their recovery.

Factors of program effectiveness

The program is considered successful because it is:

- person-driven, tailored to the individual needs of users to aid their return to work.
- implemented in close coordination with:
 - internal partners (e.g., peer support teams, Labour Relations, HR, Psychological Services, Medical Advisory or others responsible for assessing Fitness-for-Duty, police associations) and;
 - external stakeholders (e.g., private practice psychologists, workplace safety boards, special investigations units)

Lessons Learned

Program developers found:

- There is much to be learned from people who have been off work. Since they are important sources of information, give them opportunities for confidential feedback on the challenges of reintegration and use data for person-centred design.
- Peers are a key asset to agencies, develop peers to become 'reintegration facilitators'.
- Engaging with external partners around their perceptions of barriers and challenges to positive return to work outcomes can be an entry to help these partners build knowledge of the program.
- Reintegration programs can be beneficial for people who return to work after positive experiences (i.e. paternity/ maternity, other career experiences, international secondments etc..). All individuals who return to work appreciate the support and opportunity to come up to speed with changes in the organisation before they return to their roles.

Importance of evaluation

- Take care with measures of success – after all having support and opportunities to address one's mental health needs, and working with officers at their own pace, should be the aim and measure of success.
- Establish a baseline to track outcomes.
- Collect clear and consistent evaluation data to evaluate program impact.
- Use evaluation data for iterative improvements in policies, and the program itself.
- Examples of evaluation questions and criteria:
 - Satisfaction: Was the reintegration program a key component in supporting your return to work?
 - Knowledge Acquisition/Skill Application: Are there lessons or skills learned during the reintegration program that you plan to use regularly to support your performance and comfort at work?
 - Performance Metrics: Long term analyses of return-to-work retention and lost time due to PTSI using several members and a comparison group of members who did not participate in the program.