

Timely measures at the workplace play a key role in the success of vocational rehabilitation

The primary goal of supporting work ability and managing disability risks is to find solutions at the workplace. The employer and supervisor play a key role. If the workplace's own means are not sufficient, vocational rehabilitation can be considered. The key to its success is timely and individual support, a positive attitude at the workplace and in the work community, and smooth cooperation between the different parties.



VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Vocational rehabilitation refers to work-related measures aimed at strengthening and supporting a person's work ability and preventing premature disability. The aim is that the person can continue in their work or move to a new job in the open labour market. Means of vocational rehabilitation include work trials, job coaching, retraining and business subsidies for starting or continuing one's own undertaking.



SOLUTIONS

Attitude and atmosphere at the workplace.

The encouraging attitude and support of the work community and the supervisor in particular are crucial. Communicate clearly that the rehabilitee's return to work is desired and supported. Encourage open discussion and breaking down prejudices. Influence attitudes with information, examples and cooperation.

Work modification and individual arrangements.

Modify the work tasks, working hours and/or workstation according to the needs of the rehabilitee. Offer realistic tasks that are suitable for their health. Aim for continuity of work and a smooth return to everyday life.

Need for information and support.

Invest in the competence of managers and supervisors in vocational rehabilitation and its opportunities. Share good practices and operating models between workplaces. Use low-threshold advice channels, such as the employment pension company's corporate service number.

Cooperation between occupational health care and supervisor.

Participate actively in occupational health negotiations and find solutions that support work ability together. Review the rehabilitation plan and follow-up with occupational health care. If possible, use occupational health care and social welfare experts to assess the overall situation.

Cooperation between different parties.

In addition to occupational health care, cooperate with the employment pension company. When planning rehabilitation, it is important to find out at an early stage whether the employee will return to their own work with modifications or whether the job description will change permanently. Clear roles and responsibilities as well as open and goal-oriented cooperation promote the success of rehabilitation. Monitor and assess the implementation and impact of the plans together.

Rehabilitation at a new employer.

Understand the objectives of rehabilitation. Provide clear onboarding and realistic expectations for the rehabilitee. Support the rehabilitee's adaptation to the new work community.

94%

of rehabilitations were completed

73%

of those rehabilitated at their own workplace returned to work

66%

of workplaces had implemented work ability support measures before applying for rehabilitation

The key to successful rehabilitation is timeliness, individuality and cooperation.

Source: Varma's data, 2021–2024.

What do we know?

The workplace plays a key role in the prevention of disability and the successful return to work. It is essential to identify signs of deteriorating work ability in time and to use the workplace's own means to manage disability risks. The means include work modification, partial sickness allowance and works trials carried out on the basis of a decision by occupational health care.

If the workplace's own measures are not sufficient, vocational rehabilitation may be considered. Its key tools include work trials, job coaching and retraining. The key to the success of rehabilitation is its timeliness, the rehabilitee's motivation, active participation in the planning and implementation of rehabilitation, commitment to individual support throughout the rehabilitation process and close cooperation between different parties.

Why is this important?

Successful vocational rehabilitation is important for both employees, employers and society as a whole. Successful rehabilitation reduces sickness absences and thus the risk of disability and promotes the utilisation of the rehabilitee's

skills and experience in their own or new organisation. In addition, preventing disability and supporting returning to work strengthens the work community's confidence and ability to face work ability challenges in the future. Proactive and individual measures at the workplace are an investment that supports both the disability risk management and the employees' work ability.

What should be done?

The workplace must ensure timely support and individual solutions for rehabilitees. This means early identification of work ability challenges, flexible work arrangements and close cooperation with occupational health care and other parties. The supervisor's active support and a positive atmosphere at the workplace strengthen the rehabilitee's motivation and confidence in the process. During rehabilitation, the workplace can offer work trial and apprenticeship positions, enable the modification of work tasks and monitor the smoothness of work in cooperation with occupational health care. The workplace must ensure that the rehabilitation plan is aimed at work tasks where the rehabilitee has realistic opportunities for employment and continuing their career in the long term.

HOW CAN YOU CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUCCESS OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AT THE WORKPLACE?



- As a supervisor, have an open and early discussion with the employee and show genuine interest in their situation.
- Identify work ability challenges as early as possible and actively react to them.
- Offer individual support, realistically taking into account the rehabilitee's life situation, resources and possible obstacles.
- Participate actively in occupational health negotiations in which solutions are sought together to ensure the employee's smooth return to work.
- Enable individual work modifications and different kinds of flexibility options to find tasks that are suitable for your health.
- Clearly communicate the appreciation of the rehabilitee and build trust with an accepting atmosphere.
- Work in close cooperation with occupational health care and the employment pension insurance company and ensure clear roles, responsibilities and objectives.

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