

Return to Work after a Mental Health Problem: Analysis of Two Different Management Models

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Abstract : Mental health problems in the workplace are currently one of the main causes of absences. Research work has highlighted the importance of a collaborative process involving the stakeholders in the return-to-work process and has established the best management practices to ensure a successful return-to-work. However, very few studies have specifically explored the combination of various management models and determined whether they could satisfy the needs of the stakeholders. The objective of this study is to analyze two models for managing the return to work: the 'medical-administrative' and the 'support of the worker' in order to understand the actions and actors involved in these models. The study also aims to explore whether these models meet the needs of the actors involved in the management of the return to work. A qualitative case study was conducted in a Canadian federal organization. An abundant internal documentation and semi-directed interviews with six managers, six workers and four human resources professionals involved in the management of records of employees returning to work after a mental health problem resulted in a complete picture of the return to work management practices used in this organization. The triangulation of this data facilitated the examination of the benefits and limitations of each approach. The results suggest that the actions of management for employee return to work from both models of management 'support of the worker' and 'medical-administrative' are compatible and can meet the needs of the actors involved in the return to work. More research is needed to develop a structured model integrating best practices of the two approaches to ensure the success of the return to work.

Keywords : return to work, mental health, management models, organizations

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