

Return to Work Experiences after Acquired Brain Injury (ABI)

In Fall 2023, the Return to Work team held focus groups to better understand the experiences of returning to work for individual's living with the effects of ABIs.

Key Themes

Employer Knowledge of ABI

Participants shared inconsistencies in their employer's knowledge and understanding of ABIs. When employers seemed to know little about ABIs, participants felt unsupported.

“ _____
[Employer] had no knowledge about things that I might need. So it all had to come from me.
_____ ”

Impact to Quality of Life

Participants shared how their ABI affected their quality of life, including:

- Strained relationships with family and coworkers
- Feelings of social isolation
- Decreased independence in activities of daily living
- Financial challenges due to reduced hours or lost income

Mental Well-Being

Participants reported struggles with their mental health as a result of the return to work process or the inability to return to work:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Challenges regulating emotions and coping with stress

“ _____
I work with children.... and when you can't self regulate yourself, then it's really, really difficult to be able to help other people
_____ ”

Navigating Systems

Participants noted several challenges working with medical professionals, WSIB, insurance companies and employers.

“ _____
There's your own expectations your employer, WSIB.... medical professionals... they don't seem to always line up.
_____ ”

What Worked Well?

Participants who did return to work shared what helped them:

- Supportive employers and coworkers
- Tailored accommodations at work
- Acceptance of the “new normal”

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