

## Formerly Injured Nurse Now Ohio RETAIN's Greatest Ambassador

November 2022 RETAIN Success Story

*"I would recommend the Ohio RETAIN program to anyone injured outside of work. Kimberly, my health care coordinator, was key to me getting the proper care at times and was a huge help in communicating with my doctors in between appointments. She anticipated my needs before I did sometimes. If it wasn't for Kimberly with RETAIN initiating the communication, I would still be stuck in bed in debilitating pain." – Nicole*

### BACKGROUND

Nicole, a nurse with Bon Secours Mercy Health, joined Ohio RETAIN after she was injured in a car accident. She returned to work for three days, but the pain in her shoulder worsened until she could no longer move her arm. She learned in the emergency room that she had broken her shoulder. "The seat belt actually jammed it up in there and cracked it," Nicole said.

Typically, Nicole's job duties included heavy physical tasks like moving patients from beds, transferring patients from wheelchairs, lifting patient harness equipment, and giving injections and medications. She could not work during her six-month recovery.

The Ohio RETAIN program is a perfect fit for participants like Nicole, who gain access to supportive resources for food, transportation, and rent assistance. Return-to-work (RTW) coordinators and medical care team members create stay-at-work or return-to-work (SAW/RTW) plans that identify workplace accommodations that participants may need. The program also offers vocational assistance to help workers remain on the job or find new employment, if needed.

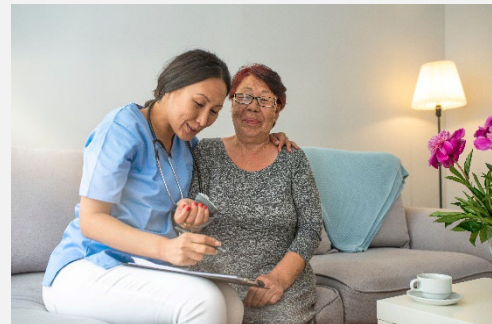
### CHALLENGE

Kimberly Brickler from Ohio RETAIN reached out to Nicole, who initially thought she would be out of work only for six weeks. However, within a month of the accident, Nicole developed a tremor and brain fog. "At one point, I could hardly feed myself. I had to teach myself to eat with my other hand



### Challenge-Action-Results

**Challenge:** Nicole, a hospital nurse, could not return to work for 6 months due to a shoulder injury from a car accident.



**Action:** Ohio RETAIN assessed her needs, collaborated with her health care team, helped her coordinate job accommodations, and followed up with the medical team.

**Results:** Nicole recovered from her injuries and successfully returned to work, where she actively promotes the Ohio RETAIN program among her colleagues.

because my hand shook so bad,” Nicole said. She became depressed and anxious because her injury prevented her from playing with her young child. She also could no longer engage in hobbies like karate and crochet. Her supervisor expressed concern about Nicole returning to bedside care with a pronounced hand tremor. Nicole realized she would be out of work longer than six weeks and began visiting specialists to discover the reason for the tremor.



## ACTIONS

To help Nicole recover from her injuries and return to work, Ohio RETAIN implemented several strategies:

**Assessed needs.** Ohio RETAIN connected Nicole with a social worker, who shared information about supportive services. Brickler, Nicole’s physician, and a social worker collaborated with Nicole to tailor a SAW/RTW plan that included physical therapy and

case management services. “They were able to get me help that I sometimes didn’t even know I needed yet,” Nicole said. The Ohio RETAIN care team encouraged Nicole to request a medical leave of absence from her employer. After Nicole’s physician prescribed lifting restrictions, Nicole received coaching on how to request job accommodations to reduce the amount of weight she was expected to lift. As a precaution, Brickler helped Nicole explore other roles within Bon Secours Mercy Health. However, Nicole’s employer agreed to modify her job tasks during her recovery.

**Coordinated medical care.** When Nicole was nearing the end of her medical leave, she needed help coordinating her care and communicating with her medical providers. When a key medical test was delayed because Nicole’s specialist was on vacation, Brickler contacted Nicole’s RETAIN provider to intercede. Brickler knew the surgeon had access to Nicole’s records. The physician agreed, and Nicole was able to continue her recovery without interruption.

**Facilitated a successful recovery.** Nicole visited several specialists to treat her tremor, but she did not see any improvement. Nicole felt overwhelmed trying to navigate various health care systems and providers and shared her frustration with being shuffled from one office to another. “[Brickler] was the one helping me reach out to doctors because I was just kind of getting passed along,” Nicole said. “And if the doctor couldn’t fix me in that moment, they passed me [to another doctor].”

To address Nicole’s frustrations, Brickler contacted Nicole’s first physician to arrange for another exam to diagnose her continued discomfort and to update her SAW/RTW plan.

With Nicole’s determination, along with support from Brickler and Ohio RETAIN, Nicole was able to progress through her SAW/RTW plan, overcome health care barriers, and return to bedside care as a charge nurse. She now encourages her colleagues to join the Ohio RETAIN program. “I tell all my doctors and providers how great the RETAIN program is and how they should encourage patients to participate.”

## KEY TAKEAWAYS AND RESULTS

- Ohio RETAIN helps program participants gain an improved quality of life by fostering success at work after any injury or illness.
  - Nicole’s physician, social worker, and nurse worked together with Nicole to map out a plan for her to return to work.
  - The Ohio RETAIN health services coordinator helped manage all of Nicole’s support services—including getting a health reassessment and referral for tests—and addressed Nicole’s anxiety and depression.
  - Ohio RETAIN helped Nicole coordinate workplace accommodations with her employer that supported her successful return to work.
  - The social worker continued to follow up with Nicole throughout her RETAIN enrollment period to make sure she had what she needed to maintain her successful return to work. Now both Nicole and Brickler are great ambassadors for Ohio RETAIN, sharing its value from the perspectives of a participant and a case manager.



*Ohio is participating in RETAIN (Retaining Employment and Talent After Injury/Illness Network) to build connections and improve coordination among employers, health care providers, and other key parties to help newly injured and ill workers stay in the workforce. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS), in coordination with several partners, leads Ohio RETAIN. The U.S. Department of Labor, in collaboration with the Social Security Administration, sponsors RETAIN.*

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