

Return to Work  
After Brain Injury

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No Relevant Financial Conflicts: Relevant to the content of this educational activity, I do not have any relevant financial conflicts with commercial interest companies to disclose.



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Objectives

- Identify provider specific role in the return to work process
- Identify three strategies to work with individuals and employers
- Discuss process and result of collaboration within case study



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## Introduction

- Acquired brain injury (ABI) is an injury to the brain, either with a traumatic or a non-traumatic cause, that occurs after birth. (Donker-Cools, Schouten, Wind, and Frings-Dresen, 2018)
- 75% of patients with ABI are of working age (Foy, 2014)
- 40% are able to return to work (RTW) after 1 or 2 years (van velzen et al., 2009)



(Khazaeipour et al., 2014)

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### Anatomy and Functional Areas of the Brain

Figure 1: Anatomy and Functional Areas of the Brain 2011. Retrieved from: <https://www.alamy.com/anatomy-and-functional-areas-of-the-brain-image771800.html>

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## Demographics

- Sex, age, educational level, living arrangement, number of children, time since injury, the event causing injury, loss of consciousness at injury, and earlier incidents of concussion or brain injury (Dornonville de la Cour et al. 2019)
- Shorter length of time since injury and male sex are predictors of a greater gain of working hours (Dornonville de la Cour et al. 2019)



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## Providers

- Physicians
- Neuropsychologist
- Physical Therapist
- Occupational Therapist
- Speech Therapist
- Employer
- Case manager/social work
- Employment services and professionals



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## Return to Work Models

- Comprehensive day treatment model
  - Individual and group therapies
  - Vocational trials
  - Supported employment
- Vocational case coordination model
  - Early medical and vocational rehabilitation intervention, work trials, employer education, temporary work support, and supported employment
- Resource facilitation
  - Partnership that helps people and communities chose, get and keep information, services and supports to make informed choices and meet their goals
- Individual approach to supported employment
  - Job coaches
  - State vocational rehabilitation (VR) services
    - Assessment of job seeker
    - Job development
    - On the job site training and support
    - Case management
    - Long-term ongoing follow alongs



Anders, D., et al. (2016)

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(Donker-Cools, Daams, Wind, and Frings-Dresen; 2016)

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### Injury

<p><b>Barriers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Cognitive</li><li>Physical</li><li>Injury</li><li>Vulnerability</li><li>Fatigue</li></ul>	<p><b>Solutions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Strength based work</li><li>Support group</li></ul>
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### Personal

<p><b>Facilitators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Motivation</li><li>• Prior job performance</li></ul>	<p><b>Barriers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Too much drive</li><li>• Stress</li></ul>	<p><b>Solutions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Set limits</li><li>• Personal effectiveness</li></ul>
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### Employer

<p><b>Facilitators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support</li><li>• Awareness</li></ul>	<p><b>Barriers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Company policies</li><li>• Reorganization</li><li>• Graded RTW plan</li></ul>	<p><b>Solutions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Abilities versus disabilities</li><li>• Adaptation</li><li>• Accommodations</li><li>• Colleague support</li></ul>
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### Environment

<p> <b>Facilitators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supportive spouse/partner</li></ul>	<p> <b>Barriers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Family stressors</li><li>• Physical environment</li></ul>	<p> <b>Solutions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Home help</li><li>• Modifications</li></ul>
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(Donker-Cools et. al., 2016)

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### Support

<p> <b>Facilitators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Professional support</li><li>• Support groups</li></ul>	<p> <b>Barriers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of patient and professional education</li><li>• Limitations</li><li>• Regulations</li><li>• Resources</li></ul>	<p> <b>Solutions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Professional supervision and support for patient and employer</li></ul>
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(Donker-Cools et. al., 2016)

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### Accommodations

- **Fatigue:**
  - Flexible scheduling
  - Frequent work breaks
  - Supportive employment
  - Job coaches
  - Job sharing opportunities
  - Allow part time schedules

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(Brain Injury Association (BIA), 2010)

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**Accommodations**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Physical:</b></li> <li>• Ramps</li> <li>• Handrails</li> <li>• Disabled parking spaces</li> <li>• Lever style door handles</li> <li>• Automatic doors</li> <li>• Remove clutter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Visual</b></li> <li>• Change fluorescent lighting to high intensity white lights</li> <li>• Increase natural lighting</li> <li>• Glare resistant computer screens</li> <li>• Written information in large print</li> <li>• Assistive technology</li> </ul>
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(BIA, 2010)

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**Accommodations**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Concentration:</b></li> <li>• Private office</li> <li>• Reduce distractions</li> <li>• Additional time</li> <li>• Task breakdown</li> <li>• Limit environmental sound</li> <li>• One task at a time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Organization</b></li> <li>• Check lists</li> <li>• Calendars</li> <li>• Reminders</li> <li>• Electronic organizers</li> <li>• Mentor</li> <li>• Weekly meetings with supervisor</li> <li>• Problem solving techniques</li> <li>• Job re-structure</li> </ul>
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(BIA, 2010)

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**Accommodations**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Memory:</b></li> <li>• Tape-record meetings</li> <li>• Written and verbal instructions</li> <li>• Limit verbal instructions</li> <li>• Additional training time</li> <li>• Provide typewritten minutes of each meeting</li> <li>• Written checklists with color coding</li> <li>• Instructions near frequently used equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Attendance</b></li> <li>• Flexible leave and hours</li> <li>• Self-passed workload</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Company policies</li> </ul>
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(BIA, 2010)

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### Accommodations

- Emotional regulation:
  - Regular praise and encouragement
  - Counselling
  - Employee assistance programs
  - Provide sensitivity training to co-workers
  - Stress management plan
  - Regular breaks
- Adjustment to change
  - Open communication
  - Weekly or monthly check-in meetings
  - Provide preparation education for changes



(BIA, 2010)

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- **What was your first job?**
- **How did you get it?**
- **Did anyone help you get your first job?**



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### Integrated Resource Team: A Community of Support

- Natural supports
- Case management
- Supported community living
- Advocate
- Peer mentor
- Mental health therapists
- Occupational, Speech, Physical Therapists
- Vocational Rehabilitation / Department for the Blind Counselors
- Employment Specialists
- Job Developers
- Job Coaches
- Benefits Planners



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### Employment Professionals

- Rehabilitation Counselor
- Employment Specialist
- Job Developer
- Job Coach
- Benefits counselor
- Advocate



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### IowaWORKS

- Services available:
  - Resume preparation
  - Job applications
  - Workshops
  - National Career Readiness Certificate
  - Mock interviews
  - On-site employer events
  - Employer panels
- Labor Market Information
- Career Services
- Workforce Advisors
- WIOA Title I
- ... and much more



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## Career Decision

1. Learning about yourself
  - Where have you been?
  - Where do you want to go?
2. Learning about the world of work
  - Regional data



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## Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Figure 2. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>.



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## Career Decision

<p><b>Learning about yourself</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic Needs Assessment</li> <li>• Self-Assessment / Resume</li> <li>• Interest Inventory</li> <li>• Academic Assessment</li> </ul>	<p><b>Learning about the world of work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work-site Assessment</li> <li>• Informational interviews</li> <li>• Labor Market Information</li> </ul>
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### Individualized Employment Plan

- Cleared for work
- Consider strengths and limitations
- Client-reported barriers and what works
- Define self-sufficiency
- Plan to achieve self-sufficiency
- Accommodations



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### Employment Strategies

- Volunteer Opportunities
- Informational interviews
- Job Shadows
- Internships (paid and unpaid)
- On-the-job training
- Training, Education, Credentialing
- Job Fairs
- Hiring Events
- Reverse Job Fairs



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### Benefits Planning

- When receiving income-based assistance, these may (or more likely, will) start to fall away after beginning to earn wages.
- Examples:
  - SSI/SSDI
  - Housing assistance
  - Food assistance



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- Benefits Planners



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## Case Study

- Re-invent
  - Previous job: Roofer
  - Education: Graphic Design
- Return to current position
  - Accountant (current employer not open for person to return)
  - Accountant (find a new employer)



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