

Manufacturers Offer New Family Benefit to Employees

Adrienne Selko | Nov 02, 2018

Volvo is one of the first companies to offer comprehensive resources for families dealing with autism and other neurological conditions.

Manufacturing companies often view their employees as family. I have been on many factory tours where you can feel that family connection between employees. The connection extends to employees' families as companies include them when offering benefits.

One of the increasing needs among families is the ability to help children and young adults who are autistic. And the manufacturing community is responding to this need by offering a suite of benefits to help address these issues.

"Many people don't realize how many employees are dealing with this issue," explains Mike Civello, vice president, employer services division, at Rethink Benefits. "One in six children have some type of developmental disability. And there are often very few resources to help parents."

To address this need Rethink Benefits created a web-based program that puts clinical best practice treatment solutions at employees' fingertips. The program is comprised of five different resources:

Treatment programs — The research-based best practice treatment program provides over 1,500 video-based teaching steps depicting clinically-trained therapists working with children on the autism spectrum. Developed by nationally recognized leaders in the field and available on demand 24/7, the program can be customized to specifically meet the unique needs of each child.

Care coordination — Parents can add an unlimited number of team members to the program and coordinate care among the child's support team including therapists, teachers, medical professionals and family members.

Peer support — Online communities and forums allow parents to communicate with and receive encouragement and support from other parents of children with autism as well as other developmental disabilities.

Tele-consultation — On-demand live video chat with experienced clinicians helps guide parents through the challenges of their child's developmental disability.

Automated reporting — The system helps parents track their child's progress and collaborate more effectively with professionals. The administrator dashboard provides employers with real-time utilization and outcomes data.

One of the first companies to use Rethink's program was Volvo. IndustryWeek talked to the company about the program.

IW: What were some factors that led to you deciding to offer this program to your employees?

Volvo: Volvo Car USA has a focus to be an employer of choice. One major component of this goal is providing world-class benefits, which includes Rethink Benefits. We know that employees who have dependents that are developmentally disabled are more likely to miss work and be worried about their family, which also adds stress to them at work. It is important to us to provide our employees support both within and outside of the workplace. Rethink provides the valuable resources they need, beyond medical care. As we continue to grow rapidly as an organization and with the establishment of our first factory in the United States, Rethink remains a valuable partner to affirm our commitment to our people and what matters to them most.

IW: Of the different types of assistance that is available which ones have your employees found the most useful?

Volvo: The 24/7 teleconsultation services provided by expert behavioral therapists – having the one

on one coaching and support is invaluable for parents who are managing these complex and stressful life situations while remaining committed to a full-time work schedule.

Additionally, upon surveys, user interviews and other measures, 89% of Rethink's members claim a stress and anxiety reduction, 52% claim it has saved time and increased productivity – on average employees claim to have saved 20 hours per month by using Rethink, and over 90% claim that having Rethink shows their company truly cares about them and their families.

IW: With your awareness of the issue are you starting to look at your current workforce and see if you might have workers that have different capabilities and therefore redesign their jobs?

Volvo: We are seeing exponential growth in the U.S. operations this next year and has identified this as a very important subject to explore and address with Rethink – once the population growth stabilizes end of 2019.

Expanding Awareness

As Volvo examines its workforce to see if perhaps some of its current employees might be on the autism spectrum, many employers are coming to that conclusion as well.

"The reality is that this is a population that we don't know that much about from a workplace perspective and we need to help companies understand, accommodate and provide for employees who present themselves in a different manner," says Civello.

For this reason, last spring Rethink Benefits launched the Neurodiversity Training Center. Neurodiversity is the larger term which includes a variety of conditions including Dyspraxia, Dyslexia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Dyscalculia, Autistic Spectrum and others.

The center will focus on the training of managers and colleagues of the neurodiverse community. Companies can use Rethink's E-Learning modules and clinical support system, to help managers learn strategies to find ways to integrate these workers.

"Many companies already have employees who are on the spectrum and would benefit from identifying the particular skill sets these employees possess and create a work environment that fit these skills," Civello said.

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