

Seattle Children's Hospital: Supporting Employee Caregivers of Children with Special Needs



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What's important to Seattle Children's and why did you choose Rethink Benefits?

I've been here a little over four years and the reason I came to Children's was because of the culture. The support it provides not only to its employees, it also works with the community and the patients from all around the world to provide a very caring and giving environment.

A couple of years ago when we rolled out this program, one of our largest strategic investments in 2017 was our people. We looked at what can we do for our employees, our caregivers who work with the patients, and the community to make it less stressful for them. We found that Rethink was a perfect match for us.

One of our employers here in the region had just rolled out Rethink and I had listened to what the program offers. I thought oh, this is a perfect fit. Perfect fit meaning that it is a program that supports our employees in respect to giving them guidance, support, understanding, and tools needed to work with their developmentally disabled children. It was a no-brainer in joining Rethink. The program has done very well in that it serves our community and it also serves our employees and their children.

As a health care provider, Seattle Children's already has a behavioral health unit and many programs in place for not only the community but for our employees. Our biggest concern with Rethink was would it overlap with any of the programs we already provide. As we looked into the services that they provide, we found that it provides additional services outside of what Children's provides.

We called in our behavioral health team and some of our other Psychiatrists to look at the program and asked them to vet it and see if it would if it would work and complement what we do here at Children's. They found that not only did it complement and provide additional services, but services that were not available through Children's and/or even in the private sector. It might get addressed with the behavioral health specialists, but there's a limited number available to treat children. This

program is a perfect supplement to help the parent as they're working towards diagnosing or looking for tools to help them work with their children.

It is also a program that works with the community, and by that, I mean it works for our employees. Rethink identifies resources that are available to the community for the children with learning disabilities. As an example, if you have an autistic child, going to the dentist can be a struggle. Or finding a certain kind doctor or a pediatrician who works with autistic children. There are resources available on Rethink that can point you to your local community and work with you and with your kids to get the treatment that is needed.

One of the biggest challenges of our families who are in need of support is "where do they go?" Yes, there's a behavioral health therapist available, but there's a two-year waiting period to see somebody. The child needs a dentist, annual checkup, and they don't know where to go, and it's hard to find. They need resources where they would be able to obtain that information. Rethink provides that all together, kind of one-stop shopping. It is that easy to use.

What are some of the ways that you introduced the benefit?

When we elected to go with Rethink, the next big step was rolling out the program. One of the things when you get ready to look at a program like Rethink is, we thought about rolling it out with open enrollment. Then we thought no, it would get lost with all the other benefit changes. People may not necessarily hear what Rethink has to offer, so it became a no-brainer in the sense that autism month in April would be the perfect time to roll it out.

The first thing we did that really helped us with our success is we drew upon our various vendors and healthcare professionals here to help us talk about the program and how best to communicate it. We also have the advantage of reaching out to our community here about this program.

We met on a regular basis with our health healthcare professionals talking about where we make this information available so that our employees can learn of this program. Your EAP providers, your health care

providers, medical, dental, they have services that complement the services made available by Rethink, so we pulled them in as well and asked them to join us in identifying new areas where they could help.

Rethink was great in coming to the meetings that we had so they could get a better sense of how to address our audience and whether it be through a newsletter or through a web page. We also had blogs that were set up that we used and continue to use those blogs where we post Rethink's monthly newsletters, the quarterly webinars, and then of course we make them available on our child website.

In addition, our behavioral health team helped coordinate meetings with schools in our neighborhood and to reach out to some of the health care providers and DSHS. When I say reaching out to some of the community providers, it was more about making people, healthcare providers or professionals aware that this program is available to our employees and that they can access it at no cost.

When you think about the number of employers in our Seattle area who have access to Rethink, it represents a large population. What we found is many times providers are aware who the individual works for, but they don't know that the employer has this benefit.

We worked with Rethink and came up with a postcard that identified the local employers who have Rethink coverage and made it available only to the healthcare providers and to teachers so that those individuals who worked with autistic children or parents with children with learning disabilities would recognize that this program is available.

I also found that by inviting some school districts, some key individuals who worked with children at some of our local school districts here handing out this little postcard. They were very much appreciative of knowing that this service was available.

Who has access to use the Rethink program?

It's a program that family members, babysitters, teachers, whoever the parent wants to give access to so they can learn more about the program and the case specifics for the child or the treatment plan. The parent gives permission to allow someone else to see that information on the Rethink platform. It's the one-stop shopping. It's all on one website for that family and whoever they designate to have access to help with and support the child.

We've seen with the younger generation if there is a sibling of someone with a disability, it's common that they may one day have to be a guardian or play a caregiver role and they very often join as well. Even aunts and uncles, so we're very open and accessible and we understand there are a lot of variances in the way that families are constructed, particularly when

you have a situation where a child does have special needs and more systems of care needed. We never turn anybody away.

I think the biggest challenge for me personally is that I really would like the entire healthcare professional world to know who has this benefit of Rethink so that they too would also be able to use it for the kids and help the parent and support them.

What feedback have you received?

Rethink has been very well-received, and we have gotten many compliments from our employees. They've told us they really appreciate the program, more specifically towards the teaching tools. Being able to go on the site and look at a video and pick up teaching tips and print out teaching tools to help with the various stages of development.

Our employees also greatly appreciate the fact that they can call a consultant. I think this is something I've heard the most about. When they go to see their therapists, that the little person is with them. As they interact with their therapist, most of the time is spent talking about the child and the child is there and involved in the conversation, so they get very little time to really talk about their concerns or their challenges. What we've heard on more than one occasion is the fact that they have 24/7 access to the Rethink behavioral health specialists. They can schedule a call at their convenience, and it is just a call between the behavioral health therapist at Rethink and our employee, so they have dedicated time.

By being able to do it whether they're scheduling it at lunchtime or before they arrive at work, it has saved them a lot of time when it comes to commuting to the therapist's office versus just picking up the phone and asking questions. They just found it a really valuable resource.

What would you say to other organizations about Rethink?

I would say that to utilize the services of Rethink is a no-brainer. As speaking and working with Seattle Children's on this program has been awesome and very rewarding so as far as Rethink and working with them. You will find that they are very hands-on. They will work with you. They'll help put things together for you and they were there for us through the entire implementation process and still remain available to us at all times.

