

Early contact with the employer

– three-party meeting

Employers usually notice too late that something needs to be done to prevent or shorten sick leave among employees. Also, insurance agency usually takes actions too late to be able co-ordinate the review meetings and the planning process of return to work.

This is why Jönköping County Council is testing a new approach where the physician, in consultation with the patient take direct contact with his/her employer.

Goal

The aim is to identify patient's ability to work and to initiate and plan for a possible rehabilitation process at the early stage in order to possibly prevent or shorten the period of sick leave.

It is important that the patient, healthcare professionals and the employer / employment services have an early dialogue to clarify whether the patient can remain at work, possibly with adjusted tasks during the period of sick leave or if anything else should be done. Care must therefore be the part of the employer / employment agency's view of the situation. Also, the employer / employment agency must know if any special considerations have to be done regarding the patient's medical status.

Method

Three -party talks mean that the responsible physician and the patient (who is or may become sick) have a telephone conversation with the employer / employment agency to prevent or shorten the illness. The call should be carried out in the early stage, before the possible sickness or four weeks after the first day of the sick leave and before the insurance agency schedules a reconciliation meeting. Documentation in the medical record should be made according to the agreed plan, how monitoring has been conducted and who participated in the call.

Three -party meeting is a physical meeting between the patient (who is or has a risk of being sick), the responsible physician and employer / employment agency. The meeting call should be carried out in the early stage, before the possible sickness or four weeks after the first day of the sick leave and before the insurance agency schedules a reconciliation meeting. Documentation in the medical record should be made according to the agreed plan, how monitoring has been conducted and who participated in the call.

In case of work-related disorders the referral is sent via the employer to the company's care organization, if one exists.

Monitoring

A follow-up /study on 38 meetings / calls has shown that sick leave has been avoided in about 10 cases. In some cases, there were risk of long-term sick-leave. Moreover, in most cases the sick leave has been shortened gradually and the doctor has had a clear plan for the treatment/ recovery.

Interviews of patients and employers have shown that both parties are very satisfied with the method.

If this method is spread further, this will mean that the work situation can be better adapted to the needs of the patient and, as a result, reduce absenteeism and dissatisfaction in the workplace.