



Preventing Needless Work Disability By Helping People Stay Employed

60 SUMMITS PROJECT UPDATE

June 2010

Introduction

This update reviews the progress being made by [The 60 Summits Project](#), particularly the Action Groups it has spawned in 12 North American jurisdictions. The goal of this initiative is to spread a new model for preventing needless work absence and disability, keeping people employed, and upgrading the performance of workers' compensation and disability benefits systems across the continent. Our name reflects our intention to hold Summit workshops in all 50 U.S. states and 10 Canadian provinces as a way to begin shifting the prevailing conversation towards the new model.

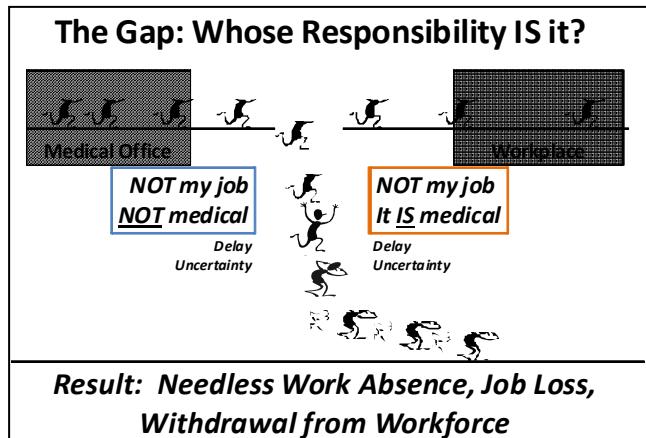
Since its founding in 2006, The 60 Summits Project has been gaining visibility, strength, and momentum. The only grassroots project active in this arena, we are an independent and decentralized initiative, non-aligned with any single stakeholder group. Our mission and approach appeal strongly to professionals uncomfortable with the harm they have seen done to people and their employers by today's "systems." They are attracted to our vision and want to be part of a win-win effort to improve outcomes for workers, employers, and society.

To date, we have held 20 Summits in 14 North American jurisdictions (2 in Canada, 12 in the U.S.). Subsequently, twelve of them have formed action groups to continue the work begun in their Summits, now in various stages of evolution. Taken as a whole, we call this the 60 Summits Alliance.

Key individuals in five new jurisdictions have recently expressed strong interest in getting started: Alaska, Alberta, Georgia, Illinois, and Louisiana.

This Gap Causes Harm to People and Wastes Money

Today there's a hole in the social fabric, a gap in the path from the doctor's office back to the workplace when working people are faced with medical conditions that affect their ability to work. Neither the doctor nor employer feels responsible for assisting the employee to minimize life and work disruption and achieve the best possible outcome.



Without a shared vision of what should happen and without communication and collaboration among the involved parties, the resulting dysfunctional "system" too often leads to needless absence from work, job loss, and eventual withdrawal from the workforce. This loss of a productive contributor has negative economic consequences for the employee and their family, the employer and insurer, and also the community and the entire society.

Purpose of The 60 Summits Project

The purpose of our non-profit organization is to inspire people in a variety of professions and

organizations to join together in volunteer groups that will:

- **Plan and convene Summit meetings** in all 50 US states and 10 Canadian provinces on the topic of improving how the stay-at-work and return-to-work (SAW / RTW) process works. (The SAW / RTW process occurs whenever an employed person becomes injured, ill, or has had a change in their ability to function. It consists of a series of decisions and actions made separately by several parties that, taken as a whole, determine whether, when and how that person stays at or returns to work.)
- **Offer an opportunity for all stakeholders to create positive solutions together** while sitting sit side by side in small groups in a workshop setting. Within The 60 Summits Project, the stakeholders include all the parties who are involved in or have a significant influence on how the SAW / RTW process works: physicians, employers, benefits administrators, workers, judges, unions, legislators, regulators and policymakers, nurse case managers, vocational rehabilitation specialists, and so on.
- Hold Summit workshops where participants:
 - **Learn about the new work disability prevention paradigm** embodied in a report from the American College of Occupational & Environmental Medicine ([ACOEM](#)) entitled "Preventing Needless Work Disability by Helping People Stay Employed"
 - **Decide whether to implement the report's recommendations**, and if so, to develop a strategy and identify concrete action steps that will actually improve the SAW / RTW process in their own daily practice, organization, community, and state or province.
 - **Form an action group** that will continue to propagate the work-disability prevention paradigm among their colleagues and constituencies, and take on-going action to implement positive changes in disability benefits and workers' compensation programs in their own organizations, community and jurisdiction.

- **Grow our community** until people across North America are employing this new multi-stakeholder, collaborative, and problem-solving approach, and it eventually becomes the norm everywhere.

The 60 Summits Organization

The 60 Summits Project is a non-profit corporation but its relationships with local groups are informal and variable. Progress is fueled primarily by the energy of volunteers who typically have more than a decade of experience within the workers' compensation and/or disability benefits systems. They are the Summit Planning Groups and the Action Groups. They come from a variety of professions (e.g., physicians, other healthcare professionals, human resources, claims managers, rehabilitation professionals, etc.) and work settings (e.g., medical clinics, employers, insurance and managed care companies, government agencies).

The office of 60 Summits Central is in Massachusetts where Founder and Chair [Dr. Jennifer Christian](#) leads the initiative nationally and internationally with a tiny and loyal staff. New groups get started in additional jurisdictions when interest surfaces and a feasibility meeting reveals the time is ripe. There must also be sufficient local volunteer talent willing to serve on or lead a successful local Summit planning committee. (Planning Groups prepare for and produce the Summit events.) Once a group forms, it decides whether to be independent or formally affiliate with The 60 Summits Project. Although some have not, most do elect to affiliate.

From that point forward, 60 Summits Central works closely with the planning group until their Summit event, sometimes simply in a coaching / advisory role and sometimes also providing administrative, financial and communications support. On the day of the Summit workshop, Dr. Christian usually keynotes and facilitates the session, often supplemented by local speakers or panelists. Afterwards, 60 Summits often prepares a draft report of the Summit that the group then sends out.

Prior to each Summit, 60 Summits Central provides a Start-up Kit for Action Groups. Once the Summit is complete, it counsels the leadership on what to do for the first meeting or two of the Action Group.

Then, the structured business relationship that has supported the local group through the Summit phase ends.

The relationship of Action Groups with 60 Summits Central is best described as familial, a very loose alliance. Despite the lack to date of a funding mechanism that would allow us to support Action Groups more actively, we keep in touch at intervals and are very committed to their success. They tend to focus on their own jurisdictions while 60 Summits Central has a continental (and even global) focus.

Current Status of Action Groups

One of the biggest pleasures – and challenges – in this initiative is the variability among the local groups. Each has the freedom to shape their events and groups in a manner that suits their local circumstances, preferences and beliefs. The combination of personality and skill sets of the leadership and members, the local culture, current events, and legal framework make each group unique. This is particularly true of the Action Groups, since the focus of the Planning Groups – holding a conference – is more predictable. The Action Groups must really find their own way into the future in a specific local environment with which 60 Summits Central staff is unfamiliar.

It is still too soon to tell whether there is a formula for the “best way” to proceed in all cases. The oldest Action Group was founded less than four years ago; the newest less than a month ago. The earlier groups began their existence without a road map of any kind and started with nothing. Among all the groups, their current situations range from defunct, to stalled, to actively engaged, to making things happen. The newer groups have clearly benefited from a new 60 Summits Start-Up Kit for Action Groups. They got off the ground faster with a clear sense of mission, strategic direction and priorities, an action agenda and even specific objectives and a timeline for accomplishment.

The groups have made a variety of decisions about how to organize themselves. Some have decided that remaining an informal group is best for political reasons. For identical reasons, others have decided that incorporating is better. So more or less time has been spent establishing an operating structure

and action agenda. All the groups are reaching out to other organizations and finding opportunities to pass along information about the new paradigm and ACOEM’s recommendations for improving the SAW/RTW process. Many of the groups have made some solid achievements, especially given the short time since they were formed and their lack of resources. A couple of remarkable changes have occurred in states where Summits have been held.

For detailed information about what has happened in each of the 14 jurisdictions where Summits have been held see the Detailed Status Report below.

Summary and Future Plans

How can one measure the objective impact of a project whose purpose is to lay the groundwork for social change? Social change becomes possible when an idea that formerly was in a few minds is now in many. These new ideas must percolate either passively or actively through a population. Ideas are invisible. How is propagation of the ideas manifest? When one by one, people start making little changes in what they do in their everyday operations. There would need to be a surveillance system in place everywhere to capture hard data about this. That system simply does not exist.

However, we do know this: Dr. Christian has informed more than 5000 people about the new paradigm and ACOEM’s 16 ideas for improving the SAW/RTW process via speeches and email groups. The terms “work disability” and “disability prevention” are coming into common usage. Another 2000 people have participated in 20 Summits. In a survey last year, 2/3 of Summit attendees reported that they had shared the new ideas with others; 1/3 had sent copies of the ACOEM report to others; 1/5 had made changes in their own practice and 1/6 had made changes in either their organization’s policies, procedures, or their interactions with other stakeholders. On-going activity is occurring in 12 jurisdictions. Testimonials abound. We trust you will agree that we are having an impact.

In the meanwhile, The 60 Summits Project is moving forward, widely promoting the ideas, entering new states, looking for resources to provide more support to Action Groups, and expanding our

services by, for example, developing an on-line training partnership and planning a webinar series. We remain enthusiastic, hopeful, and encouraged!

DETAILED STATUS REPORT FOR 14 JURISDICTIONS THAT HAVE HELD SUMMITS AFFILIATED WITH THE 60 SUMMITS PROJECT

ARIZONA: Prior to its May 2008 Summit, the Arizona Work Disability Prevention Association (AWDPA) had already declared an intention to be an “ongoing force for positive change in Arizona” and had incorporated as a non-profit organization. Afterwards, it was awarded a \$70,000 grant from the Arizona Health & Disability Partnership, a federal Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) recipient and a major sponsor of the Arizona Summit. The grant enabled AWDPA to pay consultants to help them build their foundation and infrastructure and do some long-term planning. A facilitated leadership retreat generated a shared vision and three-year plan. AWDPA meets regularly and has a basic [website](#). They are now developing a membership structure as well as working on a marketing plan and promotional materials. AWDPA has reached out to many local professional and trade associations and has held three “Practically Speaking” multi-stakeholder breakfasts on topics related to SAW/RTW with about 80 attendees at each one.

BRITISH COLUMBIA: The BC Collaborative for Health, Productivity and Disability Prevention (known as the BCC) took a highly strategic and political approach after their Summit in November 2008. Still an informal organization, they formed Task Groups to tackle a variety of themes for change in the disability system in BC, each with 2 co-chairs. Each group identified priorities for action, made preliminary plans, and identified resource requirements. Task groups are proceeding with in-kind resources but a BCC priority is to identify sustainable support for a small secretariat and ongoing funding for projects. The Business-Government Liaison Task Group took the lead to: consolidate business involvement through participation of established business/ employer groups; gain access to relevant cross-ministry executive groups to influence provincial disability strategy, access provincial disability data, and secure government funding for the BCC and/or its projects;

and determine the formal organizational structure of the BCC. Significant progress has been made on these objectives. The BCC Steering Committee will meet shortly to consider next steps.

CALIFORNIA: The California Consortium to Promote SAW/RTW decided to constitute itself as an expert thought leadership resource for the state rather than establishing a formal organizational structure after their Summit in June 2007. This informal group has, over three years, been holding vigorous multi-stakeholder dialogues in monthly meetings and has a mailing list of 70 members. It maintains a public-access [website](#) and made substantial contributions to the state of California’s new publication, *Helping Injured Employees Return to Work -- Practical Guidance Under Workers’ Compensation & Disability Rights Laws in California*, featuring the integration of our new work disability prevention paradigm with California-specific workers’ compensation and employment law. The CA Consortium is also actively involved in planning the International Forum on Disability Management (IFDM 2010) in Los Angeles this September, and is a sponsor of that event.

FLORIDA: Since their Summit in June 2008, the Florida Stay at Work Consortium has formed a 501.c3 organization and conducted a strategy session that has created a 2010 plan with two major initiatives. The first consists of gathering statistical information and legislative updates to better assist our industry with its ever-changing focus. The second is creating and developing educational programs addressing medical causality, apportionment, and the role of the physician in the WC continuum. This will be created and presented primarily by physicians and employers, utilizing a case study approach. Part two of this initiative will address developing a educational program for clinicians, employers and all other stakeholders involved in the WC continuum. In addition, the Consortium continues to initiate partnerships with professional organizations in order to spread the word regarding the SAW/RTW effort

INDIANA: The newly formed 60 Summits Indiana has only had one meeting since their Summit this spring. Their [website](#) is in transition while they are getting organized and figuring out what to do with

the wealth of ideas generated during their March event.

MICHIGAN: Workability in Michigan (WIM) has been meeting monthly since January 2008 and held its Summit in May 2009. This is the first Action Group to have access to the 60 Summits Project's new Start-up Kit for Action Groups. WIM is now in the process of incorporating. It maintains an active [website](#). The group has created a shared vision and plan for moving forward on a two year timeline with 7 task groups, each with specific objectives and a set of tools in place to monitor progress. Among the projects, WIM is preparing to conduct a survey of small employers to determine their needs in preparation for creating a resource section of their website. WIM held a panel discussion on SAW/RTW at the Michigan Safety Conference.

MINNESOTA: The Minnesota Workability Coalition formed after their Summit in February 2008, well before the 60 Summits Project had any advice to offer Action Groups. They decided to affiliate with the Minnesota chapter of the Disability Management Employer Coalition. Their original priorities were to establish a resource website and focus on educating family practice physicians regarding SAW/RTW. The website is no longer active; the group's leader is recovering from an injury and could not submit an update for this report. Three annual medical conferences on *Impairment Without Disability* have been held in various Minnesota cities since the Summit. The conference has a [website](#).

MONTANA: Montana held three Summits in April 2008. Turning Summit recommendations into action, the WorkSafeMT Foundation formed a SAW/RTW Committee to develop Montana specific resources. Since that time, the Committee developed and published a set of recommended best practices for SAW/RTW and a set of FAQs for Montana employees and employers. These documents can be found on the WorkSafeMT [website](#). The committee is working to develop additional resources including a model program manual and implementation guide.

NEW MEXICO: The New Mexico Summit was one of the first, held in September 2006, before the idea of Action Groups had occurred to anyone. After the Summit, the state workers' compensation agency

revised and renamed its materials for employers and employees to emphasize the benefits of staying at work and issued a policy opinion that encouraged direct communication between employers and doctors regarding return to work.

In May 2009, the New Mexico at Work Partnership formed as an informal group of about 50 members whose purpose is to "change the hearts and minds of employers and healthcare providers and get all the stakeholders to work together pleasantly and voluntarily towards the same goal -- so that better SAW/RTW outcomes are a natural and more frequent occurrence." Members of the group have held a series of educational sessions on SAW/RTW for employers in rural areas; developed and distributed a packet of materials (letters, brochures) for employers to use when an employee is injured; held a recruiting session at the state's annual Workers' Compensation Association conference; and are getting underway a collaborative initiative with the University of New Mexico to offer training to doctors across the state.

NORTH DAKOTA: The state workers' comp fund, Workforce Safety & Insurance (WSI), was the sole sponsor of the North Dakota Summits held in four cities around the state in September 2007. On-going activities since that time have been driven by WSI. Following the external Summits, WSI held internal ones as well out of which came several changes in internal operations. The loss prevention group started helping employers implement return to work programs, and the claims adjusters began informally educating physicians about SAW/RTW during the claims process.

In 2009, WSI continued the multi-stakeholder dialogue by holding nine "mini-summits" called Open Forums to promote interaction and exchange of ideas among employers, medical providers and WSI. More than 350 people participated, and that program is continuing in 2010. WSI has also developed an ergonomic initiative that contracts with local PTs or OTs who go out to employers that have requested assistance to assess the situation and provide a written report. If equipment purchases are necessary, WSI provides a 3:1 match. Lastly, WSI is piloting a "workability project" in which a therapist performs a targeted functional assessment and develops recommendations for

activity limitations based on objective findings of that testing prior to a medical visit.

OHIO: The Ohio Partnership to Prevent Needless Work Disability formed to plan the Ohio Summit in March 2008. Afterwards, the group began an effort to develop recommendations to the Ohio BWC about system improvements to better track return to work progress. This group has not been active during the past year.

In April 2009, the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (the state fund and sole workers' comp insurer in the state) announced a shift of its claim management system from a disability management to a disability prevention model. (The Bureau was an in-kind sponsor of the Ohio Summit and supplied facilitators for many of the work groups.) The Bureau undertook initiatives to determine methods for identifying workers at risk for long-term disability, to identify appropriate incentives for the delivery of occupational health best practice care sufficient to prevent disability; to identify opportunities for the synthesis of claims management and medical management processes to improve outcomes, and to measure outcomes for disability prevention to allow for a continuous improvement process. The Bureau also eliminated the requirement for a physician order before ergonomic study, job analysis, tools, equipment or job modification could be put in place, and agreed to pay providers travel time and mileage to encourage them in performing work-site based interventions.

ONTARIO: The Ontario Summit was held in May 2010, and the Action Group held their first meeting this month. The draft report of their Summit is on their [website](#) along with information about how to get involved with the new Action Group.

OREGON: Oregon had both a first and a second annual Summit in May 2006 and May 2007 before the idea of Action Groups had emerged. No on-going multi-stakeholder activity is underway. Effective January 2008, the state workers' compensation agency established a requirement that non-physician treating providers (nurse practitioners, physician assistants, chiropractors and others) certify that they had read the 60 Summits' document *An Introduction to the New Work*

Disability Prevention Paradigm prior to being certified as a workers' compensation provider.

WISCONSIN: After their October 2008 Summit, the Wisconsin Consortium on Promoting Stay at Work & Return to Work has remained an informal and active group. They are meeting regularly and maintain an active [website](#). Their primary focus has been on sharing the message about preventing needless work disability in as many venues across the state as possible. In 2010, the group will host two webinars with outside speakers. One on the ADAAA has already been held, and one on resilience is planned for November. An excellent Return to Work Guide for Clinicians authored by Dr. Maja Jurisic, chair of the Consortium, is on the Consortium's website and is now in use by both Concentra and Marshfield clinic. The Consortium has recommended that the state division of workers' compensation adopt it.

The 60 Summits Alliance

Multi-Stakeholder Action Groups, Coalitions, Collaboratives, Committees & Consortiums

Arizona Work Disability Prevention Association

British Columbia Collaborative for Health, Productivity and Disability Prevention

California Consortium to Promote Stay-at-Work / Return-to-Work

Florida Stay At Work Consortium

60 Summits Indiana

Workability in Michigan

Minnesota Workability Coalition

60 Summits Montana

New Mexico At Work Partnership

Ohio Partnership to Prevent
Needless Work Disability

Ontario 60 Summits Steering Committee

Wisconsin Consortium on Promoting Stay-at-Work
& Return-to-Work

For more information about The 60 Summits Project and its affiliated Action Groups (including links to all websites)

go to: www.60Summits.org

or call 877-607-8664.