WHEN CANCER COMES TO WORK

Best Practices for Navigating Cancer in the Workplace

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Founder & Executive Director

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14,480 join in our Family Cancer Support Program
21,863 participate in our Healthy Living classes
31,928 survivors and family members take part in our support groups
8,313 learn more in our educational lectures, open to the community
84,000 high school students learn about cancer prevention in our Cancer Happens Teen Education program
2,330 kids talk about cancer, make friends and never feel alone in our summer day camps
100,108 come to health fairs, events and outreach programs
4,000 essays submitted to our Teen Cancer Writing Contest

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267,022 connections statewide so that no one faces cancer alone
Multitude of Issues Need Addressing when Cancer Comes To Work

“When you are diagnosed, your whole family is diagnosed.”
-Gilda Radner

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Cancer in the Workplace

- Nearly half of the 17 million cancer survivors in the US have lived with the disease for 10+ years
- 80% of survivors of working age return to work
- 85% of employers do not have the tools to support employees affected by cancer
- 151 days is the average length of absence from work for cancer patients once diagnosed
- Survivors’ ability to return to work decreases with a non-supportive work environment
- $38.5 billion lost in productivity due to issues related to cancer

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Let’s Not Forget About Caregivers

57% Caregivers had to adjust their work schedule or take time off.

Caregiver needs include:
- Leave of absence
- Full-time → Part-time
- Turn down promotions
- Opt for early retirement
- Quit

Every caregiver's needs are different, but often share commonalities.

1 in 5 caregivers provided more than 40 hours of care/week.

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Where and How to Begin

As one survivor said so well . . .

“Along with health worries, you now have to face the financial and professional concerns surrounding cancer and your job.”
Why Return to Work?

Normal Routine
Health Insurance
Social Support
Sense of Purpose & Well-Being
Young Patients Have to Work for a Lifetime
Financial Pressures

People return to work TOO SOON
Kind of cancer & treatment determines when employees can return to work
No two people react the same

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COMMUNICATION

• Communication
• Communication
• Communication
• Communication
• Communication

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Cancer is Costly to Employees and Employers

This is a Business Issue

Physical, Emotional & Financial Costs

- Disability, absenteeism and reduced productivity may increase

$264 Billion Lost Annually

- Productivity costs due to cancer-related challenges

#1 Cause of Bankruptcy

- Medical debt
  Financial Toxicity

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Employee Questions Upon Diagnosis

- Will there be any flexibility in my work?
- Will I have employer support?
- Am I still capable of doing my job?
- Will I be a burden to my coworkers?
- Will I be accepted?
- Will my identity change?
- Will this plateau my career?
- Is my appearance different?
- Is there any privacy left for me?
Employer Questions Upon Diagnosis

- What can I do for my employees with cancer?
- What do I say to someone with cancer?
- How do I handle changes in appearance?
- How do I minimize the shock of coworkers?
- What if someone gets sick at work?
- How will the work get done?
- How do I best respect their wishes when I am getting so many questions?
- How much can I or should I really tell other employees/colleagues?
Cancer in the Workplace

A number of employees have cancer in our office.

• How can I organize programs to learn more?

My coworker told me she has cancer.

• I don’t know what to say.

One of my employees has just been diagnosed with cancer.

• I want to be helpful but don’t know what to do.

I was just diagnosed with cancer.

• Should I tell my employer? Do I have to?

My child was just diagnosed with cancer.

• Does my employer need to know? Will I lose my job?

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Where to Start When Diagnosed – Reality

- Clarify health insurance benefits
- Find out what your employer provides
- Know your rights

- Think like your boss
- Partner with your Dr. about side effects, limitations
- Find your social worker

- Write everything down - bring a recording device or a friend
- If you need legal help, find a lawyer
- Remember HR is your friend!

- Get physical and mental rest
- Ask for support
- Anticipate and prepare for change
Where to Start When Diagnosed - Medicine

1. BEFORE telling colleagues, talk with doctor about ways illness can affect your career.
2. Tell your doctor if work is a priority.
3. Ask how will medication or treatment affect your job performance.
4. Ask how to manage side effects.
5. Can you accommodate work into scheduling treatment?
Write a Plan

- Manage expectations on both sides
- Who will your main contact be
- It’s visual
- Employer and employee check in dates and times
- Plans can change
- Revisit plan after you begin treatment
- Revisit plan when you are ready to come back to work
- Learn about your health benefits

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What to Share When Diagnosed

- Diagnosis
- Prognosis
- Expected course of treatment
- Planned leave of absence
- Emergency contacts
- What you need help with
- Realistic expectations

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Know Workplace Protections

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Family & Medical Leave Act (FMLA)
- Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act (HIPPA)
- Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA)
- Patient Protection & Affordable Care Act (ACA)
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

- Cancer is a disability
- Applies to all phases of employment
- Applies to organizations with 15+ employees
- Requires reasonable accommodations
- Treat all employees equally
**Reasonable Accommodations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Employee has to initiate request</td>
<td>• Light duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Confidential</td>
<td>• Flexible hours</td>
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<td>• May require medical documentation</td>
<td>• Reassignment to vacant position</td>
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<td>• Employer must provide – as long as it is not an undue hardship</td>
<td>• Work remotely</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Periodic breaks</td>
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<td>• Private area to take medication</td>
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<td>• Modify office temperature</td>
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Family & Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

Eligible employees can take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave.

Employee is guaranteed previous or equivalent position upon return.

Applies to companies with 50+ employees within 75 miles.

Must have worked at least 12 months and >1,250 hours in most recent 12 months.

Applies to workers in government agencies, schools, and private companies.
Recovery Time

- Physical recovery 1-3 years
- Emotional recovery 2-5 years
- Cancer can be chronic
- Many people live full lives
- What is your new normal

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Workplace Re-Entry: Managers & Colleagues

“My colleagues acted as if I had been on vacation.”

“Co-workers assumed that if I was back at work, I was fine.”

“Empathy and support wanes after a few weeks – but I still wasn’t normal.”

“My colleagues didn’t understand the impact of side effects, especially when I looked okay.”
Workplace Re-Entry: Employee

“I dreaded the ‘How are you, really?’ question.”

“I did not know my new boundaries.”

“I tried to overdo it to prove I could work.”

“I felt physically horrible but had to hide it.”

“I’m afraid to:
• Ask for support I need
• Ask for time off
• Cough
• Sneeze.”

Return to Work Challenges

Physical
Social
Emotional
Economic
Workplace Re-Entry: Employer

- "How do I manage the workload?"
- "How do I start a conversation?"
- "What is a reasonable accommodation?"
- "How do I know reasonable accommodation is working?"
- "How often do I communicate with my employee?"

Return to Work Challenges:
- Physical
- Social
- Emotional
- Economic
Workplace Re-Entry: Physical Challenges

- Fatigue
- Chemo-brain memory issues
- Pain
- Sexual dysfunction
- Neuropathy
- Lymphedema
- Incontinence
- Cardiovascular Health
- Secondary cancers
- Osteoporosis
- Overall fitness
- Desperate to keep up

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Workplace Re-Entry: Social Challenges

- Post-traumatic symptoms
- Isolation
- Uncertainty in any kind of planning
- Relationships
- Family dynamics
- Food issues
- Fatigue issues

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### Workplace Re-Entry: Emotional Challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fear of recurrence</th>
<th>Cancer related distress</th>
<th>Depression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship changes</td>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>Altered body image</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uncertainty</td>
<td>“No one gets it”</td>
<td>Defining the ‘new normal’</td>
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</table>
Workplace Re-Entry: Economic Challenges

- Financial Burden
- Health insurance
- Ongoing Medical costs
- Job Security
- Recovery Time
- Sick leave
- Will I ever get a promotion?
- Can I get another job?
COMMUNICATION

- Communication
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michellekiro7 😊 Here goes: it’s been quite a journey. 11 years ago I was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. I’m somewhat embarrassed to admit, I did NOT tell work. I was in the studio (anchoring) more frequently & now I had a scar front & center on my neck. I learned how to use makeup to cover it up. In the field, reporting, was easier. I wore scarves. A lot. I don’t know what I was afraid of, but I even kept this from my closest work friends.

Fast forward one year (2009); I was diagnosed with Breast Cancer. I couldn’t “hide” this one: I needed major surgery, chemo & radiation (what I refer to as “the full meal deal”). I told work. @kiro7seattle & my “work family” were incredible, to say the least.

So here we are this week, May of 2019: two blood draws, an ultrasound & visits with 2 docs. My endocrinologist said what’s “left” of my thyroid looks great, no change & blood work is 🙌. He is retiring now & said I really don’t need follow up! Then came the “BIG” appointment w/ my medical oncologist. If you see my stories here you already know this news: I will see her next year & if THAT appointment goes well, she will “discharge” me! WHAT?!! Yes, I will fire my oncologist! 😯 That makes me nervous. tbh. No one poking, prodding, drawing blood, checking on me. It is freeing as well. So yes, I have to wait until 2020 for THAT day, but the fact that I can wait a YEAR to see her & knowing at *that* visit it could be the last is AMAZING! 😍❤️😭

be the last, is AMAZING! 💖❤️😭 I can’t believe this summer marks 10 YEARS since my BC diagnosis. For those recently diagnosed, remember you ARE a survivor NOW. Reach out for support, it is there. Don’t be afraid to tell. To talk. To be scared. It is ok. I will listen if you need someone. 🌼💪

#swipeleft #thyroidcancer #thyroidhealing #thyroid #breastcancer #chemo #radiation #fcancer #cancerawareness #cancer #survivor #warrior #cancersurvivor #celebrate #support #life #carpediem #lovelife #thisismylife #newnormal
A teacher battling cancer must pay for her own substitute. In California, it’s the law.

“What it really is, is a reflection of how financially strapped the system has been for so long,” Heins said. “It is outrageous when you think about someone suffering from a catastrophic illness that they actually have to deal with these kinds of issues while already facing extra financial pressure.”
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USA TODAY

Court: California teacher fired for needing time off for cancer treatment can sue Catholic school

Seattle man awarded $5 million for wrongful termination after cancer surgery

Casting Exec Sues E! for Wrongful Termination Following Breast Cancer Treatment

Parents outraged after California teacher diagnosed with cancer forced to pay sub's wages while on leave

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HOW TO HELP

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Tips for Colleagues

- Say something
- Not knowing what to say is normal
- Keep your relationship as it was before
- Ask the patient or caregiver if they want to discuss or be asked anything
- Some people come to work to get a break from illness
- Send a card or email
- Offer specific, practical help
  - Run errands or cook a meal
- Continue normal gossip and talk – keep things normal!

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Tips for Survivors and Caregivers

1. Agree to a return-to-work plan with your employee
2. Consider changing your role at work if you feel you can no longer perform your job
3. Schedule regular meetings with your boss in advance
4. Consider a phased return to work
5. Think about what you want to disclose before returning to work
6. Pace the road to recovery
7. HR is your best friend!

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Tips for Supervisors

- Let your employee take the lead in conversation
- Ask your employee how they are feeling
- Ask how much time off they will need for appointments & treatment
- Discuss what will or won’t be told to their colleagues
- Offer options for time off
- Discuss policies on flexible working
- Discuss their rights to be protected
- Share services your organization has to help them
- Check in regularly

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Tips for Everyone

- Be mindful and don’t ask tons of questions
- Always ask – do not assume anything
- Listening speaks volumes
- Be specific in offers to help
- Follow the lead of the person you’re speaking to
- Everyone handles cancer differently
- Say or do something!

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Positive Changes from Cancer

- New sense of purpose
- Appreciation of loved ones and friends
- Life becomes more meaningful
- “Best thing that ever happened to me”
- Celebrate survivorship

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GOOD NEWS

Rates of cancer survivorship are increasing!

▪ In 2017 there were 15.5 million survivors
▪ By 2026 we will see an increase to over 20.3 million survivors
Tell Your Workplace to Register Today!

WHEN CANCER COMES TO WORK CONFERENCE

For employers, executives, managers, HR specialists, and healthcare professionals

BEST PRACTICES FOR EFFECTIVELY NAVIGATING CANCER IN THE WORKPLACE

Thursday, November 7, 2019 | 8:00am - 4:00pm
At the Fourth & Madison Conference Center | Seattle, WA

www.cancerpathways.org

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THANK YOU!

More questions?
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