



**FINAL REPORT  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Arizona Leadership Summit  
to Prevent Needless Work Disability**

**May 8, 2008**

**Hosted by the Arizona Work Disability Prevention Association**

**The Black Canyon Conference Center**

**Phoenix, Arizona**

Report prepared by  
**Arizona Work Disability Prevention Association (AWDPA)**  
in collaboration with  
**The 60 Summits Project**

# Final Report

## Arizona Leadership Summit to Prevent Needless Work Disability

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### Executive Summary

In mid January 2007, a group of 16 individuals from 11 different organizations in Arizona attended a 60 Summits catalyst meeting in Phoenix. They met to consider whether the time was ripe to build a shared positive vision of how the stay-at-work and return-to-work process should function in Arizona among those who participate in that process -- employers, physicians and other healthcare providers, insurance carriers and other benefits payers, case managers and others. They came together because their familiarity with how that process works today had made them uncomfortable. They were interested in finding ways to stop wasting money and hurting the people that the workers' compensation and disability benefits systems are designed to help.

At the meeting they were introduced to [The 60 Summits Project](#), a grass-roots initiative to disseminate a new work disability paradigm for disability benefits and workers' compensation systems throughout North America. The new paradigm is embodied in a [white paper](#) issued by the American College of Occupational & Environmental Medicine ([ACOEM](#)) entitled "[Preventing Needless Work Disability by Helping People Stay Employed](#)." The basic idea of The 60 Summits Project is to use the ACOEM work disability prevention white paper as a framework for discussion in stakeholder summits in all 50 states and 10 Canadian provinces across North America, and for those Summits to serve as the starting point for on-going multilateral efforts at positive system change.

After they determined that yes, the time was ripe, the group considered the feasibility of forming a group to plan and produce a Stakeholder Summit on preventing needless work disability. They were asked what they saw as the potential desirable outcomes of holding an Arizona Summit.. Below is a list of what they saw while they imagined standing out in the future, looking back at what had happened "because of the Summit." This is a list of the things the attendees at the feasibility session said had happened because of the Summit – in their own words:

- There is a more prevalent expectation for stay-at-work return-to-work (SAW / RTW) and more consistency of RTW programs around the state.
- More employers and providers see the benefit of keeping people active during recovery.
- There is a widely shared definition of SAW/RTW as a benefit – of transitional work as a means to foster recovery
- More people are aware of and using tools and methods to manage their SAW/RTW processes they learned at the Summit

- Providers, employers and payers have more positive expectations for the SAW/RTW process based on the success stories they heard at the Summit.
- Better educational materials have become available for all parties and employees, employers, providers are better informed.
- All parties are more aware of resources, have better access to them, and are using them.
- The stakeholders have endorsed the ideas espoused in the ACOEM Work Disability Prevention Guidelines as the right way to go.
- The stakeholders are now on the “same page” -- using a common language, common definitions, working within a common model.
- Cultural, political and legislative change actually occurs
- A working group has come into being to continue the work
- Arizona employers, providers and other stakeholders are now more aware of our relative performance in the SAW/RTW arena and its impact on our economic vitality and community life.
- The assumption that work is therapeutic, part of a good life, and that needless work disability is unfortunate and preventable has become widespread.
- The stakeholders including the treating clinicians, are moving towards more engagement with each other and beginning to realize that they ARE a team, and have started to act like it.

At the end of the feasibility meeting, 7 out of the 16 individuals in attendance signed up to form a group that would produce a Summit-type workshop. Over time, Arizona’s planning team grew to 19 members. The Summit planners themselves represented multiple stakeholder groups, with members who were employers, physicians, carriers, the state insurance fund, industrial therapists, physical therapists, employment advocates, case managers and so on. (See list of planners at Appendix A.) They chose to formally affiliate with The 60 Summits Project. They named their initiative The Arizona Leadership Summit to Prevent Work Disability, and shared their information through The 60 Summits Project website ([www.60Summits.org](http://www.60Summits.org)).

The newly-formed Arizona planning group envisioned their Summit as a first step in an overarching initiative to improve the well-being and productivity of Arizona’s workforce by uniting the stakeholders in a shared goal of preventing needless lost workdays and job loss due to illness, injury and aging. A key contribution to this broad social goal is to improve the timeliness, nature, and quality of services delivered to employees who are coping with the impact of injury, illness or aging on their daily lives and work -- as well as to their employers. The intended eventual result of their Summit and subsequent steps in this initiative will be an improvement in financial as well as human outcomes.

Summit planning took 15 months culminating in a successful event with over 90 total participants held on May 8, 2008 at the Black Canyon Conference Center in Phoenix, Arizona. Dr. Jennifer Christian, chair of The 60 Summits Project, gave a keynote address and facilitated the Arizona SAW / RTW Summit.

In addition to producing the Summit, the planning team created the Arizona Work Disability Prevention Association (AWDPA), a non-profit corporation in Arizona, to carry out the action plans developed by Summit participants. All participants at the Summit were then invited to

become charter members and work together to develop this multi-stakeholder organization. Their first meeting was scheduled for June 11, 2008.

The Arizona Summit received a matching grant from The 60 Summits Project and its charter North American sponsors, [Prudential Financial](#) and [Webility Corporation](#). Another Title Sponsor was the Arizona Medicaid Infrastructure Grant funded by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services of the United States Department of Health and Human Services. In addition, 10 other organizations provided financial, printing and in-kind sponsorship. (See list of sponsors in Appendix B.)

The actual Summit event was a full-day workshop beginning in the morning with registration and continental breakfast, welcoming remarks by the leadership of the planning group, followed by an inspiring testimonial by an injured workers about her personal perspective on recovery and return-to-work. Dr. Christian then delivered the keynote presentation. Afterwards, participants broke into 8 multi-stakeholder work groups to begin their deliberations.

Each work group was assigned one to three of the 16 specific recommendations made in the ACOEM work disability prevention white paper. Their charge was to decide whether the recommendation should be implemented, and if so, how to do so. Their challenge was to agree on strategies as well as on concrete first steps to take in order to start carrying out those strategies. After 90 minutes of deliberations, the stakeholder work groups reported their initial findings and described their preliminary action plans to all attendees. They listened to each others ideas, and received suggestions for improvement from Dr. Christian.

Attendees next re-convened their work groups for another hour during which they revised revise their action plans based on the new information they had learned from hearing each other's reports and from Dr. Christian. Each of the work groups then presented their revised plans to all attendees. In addition, participants were offered an opportunity throughout the day to make promises or personal commitments to themselves for what actions they were going to take, and asked to record them on special forms.

As the day drew to a close, a stakeholder panel comprised of a variety of stakeholders among the participants provided their reaction to the ACOEM work disability prevention model and the plans the action groups had come up with throughout the day. Audience discussion ensued on "what could work for Arizona" Dr. Christian summarized the meeting outcomes and key actions and the meeting was adjourned. An attendee reception followed the day's Summit.

Overall, every one of the work groups thought the ACOEM recommendations they had been assigned should be implemented. They all made action plans to do so. Commonalities among the plans became apparent as the work groups gave their reports. In particular, the newly formed association, AWDPA, was featured in many of the work group plans as a way to structure and organize leadership, advocacy, education, communications and research.

Some action plans covered more than one of the domains listed below, and some touched additional ones. For a complete listing of the work group action plans, see Appendix D. The major domains in which many of the action plans focused were:

1. Getting the word out

2. Education and training
3. Consistency/ standardization/protocols/templates
4. Communication / information exchange
5. Organizational structure/ policies

At the end of the Summit day, participants were asked to complete evaluations and indicate the extent of their desire for on-going involvement with AWDPA.

Overall, the attendees were extremely satisfied with their experience at the Arizona Summit.

- More than two-thirds of the attendees asked to stay on Arizona's group mailing list.
- More than half intend to participate in the follow-up action group, the AWDPA.

More than 80 percent of the attendees reported that:

- The workshop was a good use of their time and effort,
- The information presented was very interesting,
- Having met the other attendees will help them in the future, and
- The event had made them think differently about some important things.
- They left with a list of practical next steps they can take to improve their participation in the SAW/RTW process.

Arizona's Summit is a strong first step in a truly innovative grass-roots initiative. The relationships that were established and the action plans and personal commitments that were made during the Summit must now be transferred to the real world and be carried out. The group is planning on fulfilling these commitments through a structure that will be created by AWDPA. People will need support in order to turn their commitments into realities. The first meeting of the Association will occur on June 11 in Phoenix. (See Arizona's page at [www.60Summits.org](http://www.60Summits.org) for updates)