



GUARDIAN®

2015 Guardian Absence Management Activity IndexSM and Study Reveals Proven Steps-To-Success For Companies Of All Sizes

More than half of employers surveyed identify challenges in managing absenteeism, but dependable resources and key activities performed can positively impact Absence Management outcomes.

NEW YORK, NY – February 5, 2015 – The Guardian Life Insurance Company of America® (Guardian), one of the nation's largest mutual life insurers and a leading provider of employee benefits, today released the results of its 2015 Guardian Absence Management Activity IndexSM and Study. The study uncovered that absence management remains a priority for companies and employers of all sizes. Employers continue to address the problem despite a challenging benefits environment that includes increased regulation and implementation of the Affordable Care Act. The study reveals a 'proven path' that both small and large employers can follow to begin or improve their existing absence management program.

According to the new findings, employers report feeling they can better overcome obstacles to absence management efforts than in the past, due to more resources and third-party expertise available in the marketplace. Just over half (53 percent) of all companies face challenges applying Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADA/ADAA) regulations, down from 60 percent in 2012. While many companies made progress in their absence management efforts, there is still a long way to go:

- 58 percent of employers have difficulty interpreting federal and state leave laws
- 54 percent of employers have challenges ensuring employees are able to perform their essential duties before returning employees to work
- 42 percent of employers lack the staff resources to manage absenteeism

The study lays out a clear roadmap for employers looking to establish an absence management program by following the lead of employers who have achieved success. This four-step approach can be replicated by companies of all sizes:

1. **Setting a solid philosophy** – The highest priority should be returning employees to safe and productive work, while encouraging overall wellness.
2. **Taking key foundational steps** – Getting buy-in from senior management and following a strategic communications campaign are essential.
3. **Developing an effective model** – Using the same outside resource for short-term disability (STD) and FMLA administration, and making health management referrals are key predictors of success.

4. **Carefully measuring success** – Nearly half (48 percent) of all employers reported employee engagement to be the most critical measure of success.

“It’s imperative for companies to understand the importance of employee absences and how they can significantly compromise workplace productivity and diminish the bottom line,” said Mike Estep, Head of Group Life, Disability, and Supplemental Health Product Development at Guardian. “Employers of any size can no longer afford to view absence management as optional. Given the availability of resources, it is easier than ever to start or improve an existing absence management program and manage it effectively to achieve success.”

The Guardian Absence Management Activity IndexSM and Study is a comprehensive report designed to measure the scope and effectiveness of absence management activities of both small and large employers. It was created to provide a better understanding into successful absence management programs and to clearly identify the most effective absence management activities employers can implement to achieve future success.

The Guardian Absence Management Activity IndexSM and Study can be viewed in its entirety at GuardianAbsenceManagementStudy.com. You can also access the report and supporting Infographic on GuardianAnytime.com.

About the Survey

Guardian commissioned Spring Consulting Group, LLC to conduct a follow-up to the 2012 study to monitor changes in employer engagement and activity related to absence management. With specified criteria, Guardian surveyed 932 individuals working for employers ranging in size from 50 employees to 5,000 or more employees, spanning across various industries and representing different geographic regions. All surveys were conducted online and a threshold number of respondents were included in each employee size category to allow analysis of the results by organization size.

About Guardian

A mutual insurer founded in 1860, The Guardian Life Insurance Company of America (Guardian) and its subsidiaries are committed to protecting individuals, business owners and their employees with life, disability income and dental insurance products, and offer funding vehicles for 401(k) plans, annuities and other financial products. Guardian operates one of the largest dental networks in the United States, and protects more than eight million employees and their families at 120,000 companies. The company has approximately 5,000 employees in the United States and a network of over 3,200 financial representatives in more than 80 agencies nationwide.

For more information about Guardian, please visit: www.GuardianLife.com.

###

For Media Inquiries, Contact:

Ana Sandoval
The Guardian Life Insurance Company of America

(212) 919-8551
Ana_Sandoval@glic.com

Erin Burke
Harden Communications Partners
(631) 239-6903
eburke@hardenpartners.com