

ETHICAL STANDARDS AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Standards of practice establish fundamental concepts and rules considered essential to promote the highest ethical standards among Certified Return to Work Coordinators.

The standards of practice in disability management recognize the need to identify ethical and professional codes of conduct as well as the need to present reasonable steps in resolving ethical dilemmas.

Ethical behaviour is a requirement of effective and competent disability management practice. Ethical and professional standards of practice dictate that Certified Return to Work Coordinators apply knowledge and skills in an ethical manner, recognize that there are ethical dilemmas inherent in their professional practice, and utilize ethical decision-making to resolve ethical dilemmas. The major functions of the ethical code are to:

- protect individuals who are receiving disability management services
- provide guidance to professionals who are confronted by ethical dilemmas
- establish stakeholder and public trust and faith in the profession of disability management
- establish professional conduct between stakeholders and other professionals

Standards of ethical practice for Certified Return to Work Coordinators function within the following broad categories and specific rules:

1. The Certified Return to Work Coordinator will respect the integrity, and promote and protect the welfare of individuals with whom they are working.
 - They have a professional and personal responsibility and commitment to workers to implement and maintain optimal standards of disability management practice.
 - They have a primary obligation to keep confidential and to safeguard information about individuals obtained in the course of disability management practice or research except when this conflicts with the responsibility to the law or when maintenance or confidentiality would result in a significant risk of substantial harm to others or to the client if the client is incompetent. In such cases, they would take all reasonable steps to inform the client that confidentiality will be breached.
 - They will ensure that the individual is aware of and understands the limits of confidentiality at the onset of disability management planning.
 - They will communicate personal or confidential information to others only with the individual's written consent, or when there is a clear and immediate danger to the individual or others.

- They will discuss communication of information with the worker and will safeguard access to information, records, or other information storage means to ensure that access to information by unauthorized individuals is safeguarded.
 - They shall report to the appropriate authority actions of the worker that may cause injury to self or others, after discussion with the worker that this action will be taken.
 - They will strive to eliminate attitudinal barriers including stereotyping and discrimination toward workers with disabilities, and will not discriminate in the provision of disability management services on the basis of disability, race, origin, religion, gender, age, or sexual orientation.
 - They will recognize that culture affects the manner in which clients' problems are defined. The socio-economic and cultural experience of the client will be considered in all interactions with the individual.
 - They will be aware of family and significant others (underlying factors) and how they impact on the perceived impairment/disability of the client.
 - They will provide professional services to the worker with a disability as an individual, not just a number, within a holistic framework, focusing on the worker's functional abilities.
2. The Certified Return to Work Coordinator will maintain an objective and professional standard in their relationship with individuals with whom they work.
- They shall only provide those services that are within the scope of their competencies considering the level of education, experience, and training; shall communicate the limitations imposed by the extent of their skills and knowledge in a professional area; and, when necessary, recommend that additional opinions and services be sought.
 - They will ensure that individuals with whom they work understand the legal limitations and the extent and range of services that may be offered or provided in order to promote realistic expectations and open communication.
 - They will terminate disability case management activity when the individual can no longer benefit from these services.
 - They must clearly self-define the nature of duties, responsibilities, and loyalties in order to minimize conflict of interest among management, labour, supervisors, health care providers, and other stakeholders.
 - They will refer workers or individuals with whom they may work who may compromise an objective relationship to other professionals.
 - They shall avoid fostering dependent relationships with the client and/or family members.

3. The Certified Return to Work Coordinator will assist workers with disabilities in developing individualized disability management or return to work plans that are consistent with the individual's ability and that have a reasonable probability of success.
 - They will develop return to work plans and employment positions that are consistent with the abilities, limitations, interests, skills, experience, and training of their worker that promote the interests of the worker; and that are consistent with the productivity and business needs of the employer.
 - They will collaborate with the worker, health care provider, and employer to ensure that realistic goals are set for the worker.
 - They will advocate and promote the individual's involvement and full participation in developing return to work plans.
 - They shall ensure that the worker is fully informed about all reasonable options and services available in the delivery or disability management services.
 - They will inform workers and their families where appropriate of the benefits, implications, and effects on the benefits and employment status (if any) by participation in disability management activities.

4. The Certified Return to Work Coordinator is obligated to promote and protect the employability of the worker by identifying and communicating the individual's abilities and limitations and by developing plans that are consistent with the interests of the worker and employer.
 - They will develop return to work plans that are consistent with worker qualifications and ability to perform at work demand levels in a safe workplace.
 - They will utilize every resource reasonably available to ensure that identified needs of workers are met including referral to other professionals or providers that may provide services or resources to maximize effective service delivery.
 - They shall verify the worker's needs and resources or supports needed, by using direct and valid assessments or evaluation procedures to confirm the reasonableness of the plan.
 - They will communicate with the employer and workplace only that information that ensures suitability to perform essential work. Informed consent will be acquired for release of any confidential information.
 - They will consider the safety and welfare of the worker, fellow workers, and the workplace in developing return to work plans or in placing the worker on a job.

5. The Certified Return to Work Coordinator will provide disability management services within the framework of a professional relationship.
 - They will clarify professional relationships with workers and other stakeholders and will avoid dual relationships that could impair professional judgment or risk exploitation.
 - They shall cooperate with members of other professions when appropriate and shall actively participate in a collaborative team process when the worker's needs require such involvement.
 - They will respect the value and role of professionals and other stakeholders and will act with integrity in their relationships with professional colleagues, agencies, related disciplines, and organizations.
 - They will ensure that there is a clear and mutual understanding of the disability management plans on the part of the worker and all participants in the plan, and that all plans are developed with mutual understanding and appropriate participation.
 - They will ensure that participants involved in the disability management plan are capable of providing maximum effective services and will ensure that the level of service expectation and outcomes is mutually understood.

6. The Certified Return to Work Coordinator will promote the involvement and contribution of all professionals, programs, agencies, and referral sources involved with the worker with a disability to promote and provide procedures and programs that will ensure maximum benefit of services for the worker.
 - They shall observe ethical standards and professional conduct in interactions with other professionals involved with the worker and workplace.
 - They shall encourage practice, observation, and promotion of ethical standards that promote development of the disability management profession.
 - They will not disparage or demean other professionals, agencies, or organizations or the quality of their involvement in disability management to the worker or others with whom they work.

7. The Certified Return to Work Coordinator is obligated to maintain their skills, competencies, and professional development at a level to ensure that the individual with whom he or she works benefits from the highest quality of service.
 - They will accurately identify the services in which they are competent and qualified to perform.
 - They will continuously strive to maintain knowledge, develop skills, and be aware of developments, resources, and disability management practices that are essential to providing the highest quality of services to workers.

- They will encourage individuals under their supervision to engage in activities that further the individual's professional development.
 - They will be willing to participate in peer review of other Certified Return to Work Coordinators and to undergo review by peers.
 - They will enter into associations and maintain professional integrity.
 - They will seek help from colleagues and appropriately qualified professionals for personal problems that adversely affect their service to clients or the profession.
8. The Certified Return to Work Coordinator will promote and participate in efforts to expand the knowledge and resources needed to increase the effectiveness of services and programs for workers with disabilities.
- They will institute and participate in procedures on an ongoing basis to evaluate, promote, and enhance the quality of disability management services delivered in the workplace.
9. The Certified Return to Work Coordinator will obey all laws and regulations and will avoid activity or conduct that will cause unjust harm to others.
- They will restrict the communication of information to what is necessary and relevant with respect to the individual's right to privacy.
 - They will keep informed of standards, guidelines, regulations, and laws related to disability management practice.
 - They, in the performance of professional activity, shall not participate in fraudulent, deceitful, dishonest, or misrepresentative actions of any kind, or any form of conduct that adversely reflects on the field of disability management.
 - They will not abuse the relationship with a worker to promote personal or financial gain, or financial gain for an employer.
 - They shall not allow personal benefit or financial gain to interfere with professional conduct, judgment, or actions.
 - They shall be subjected to disciplinary actions for violations of laws, regulations, statutes, or professional codes that implicate the individual's professional conduct in the future.
 - They will refuse to participate in employment or business practices that conflict with moral, ethical, or legal standards regarding the employer including practices that result in illegal or implied discrimination in any employment practices.

10. The Certified Return to Work Coordinator will demonstrate ethical and moral conduct in their profession and will maintain and promote the integrity of the Standards of Professional Practice in Disability Management.
- They will be truthful and accurate in all public statements and promotions concerning the services, programs, products, and profession related to disability management.
 - They shall not recommend or provide professional support for individuals who engage in professional practice that violates ethical and professional codes of practice.
 - They shall inform the worker or professional committee (upon request) of ethical violations upon investigation.