

CDMP a standard of excellence for getting people back into the workplace

2,500 professionals hold Certified Disability Management Professional designation

BY WOLFGANG ZIMMERMANN

In 1997, the National Institute of Disability Management and Research (NIDMAR) began developing a consensus-based, transferable, recognizable and professional standard of excellence in return-to-work and disability management to meet the needs of employers, workers and other relevant stakeholders.

Under the umbrella of the International Disability Management Standards Council (IDMSC), NIDMAR administers two professional designations:

- Certified Disability Management Professional (CDMP)
- Certified Return to Work Co-ordinator (CRTWC).

Both are increasingly recognized as the best practice standard worldwide — there are now more than 2,500 CDMPs and CRTWCs in practice in 12 countries around the globe.

CDMP offers hiring edge

Many CDMPs hold complementary degrees, diplomas and certifications in related fields such as health care, business, law, human resources and rehabilitation. However, a CDMP demonstrates the specialized competencies required to facilitate the safe, early return to work of ill and injured workers. Canada's aging population and a global rise in mental health issues demand a particular and highly developed skill set.

Bonnie Murray spent 10 years in the HR department at Weyerhaeuser before joining the Saint John, N.B., head office of J.D. Irving. She now works as a disability manager for Irving Forest Services, which includes four paper mills as well as head office employees.

It's a big job — she handles up to 80 disability claims per year, including workplace and non-occupational injuries, as well as complex long-term disability cases.

When she was hired, Murray had a background in business administration and hu-

man resources, and was studying to become a CDMP.

"The NIDMAR modules were a huge selling point," she says. "I was virtually hired on the spot. They knew I was already trained."

Murray earned the CDMP designation in 2009 and says she couldn't do her job without it.

"The CDMP gives you tools on how to work with HR managers, unions and doctors," she says, adding the training on assistive devices "was my most difficult module. I understand all of that now because of the courses I took."

Employers have long taken note of the human, social and financial cost savings involved in proactive, consensus-based disability management practice. After years of promoting the professional designations in disability management to everyone in her sphere, Judy Geary, former vice-president of the work reintegration division at the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) of Ontario, decided to start the certification process herself.

"We were asking our staff — managers in particular — to devote a lot of time and energy towards undertaking the training in preparation for the examination," she says.

"I felt it was important to be a role model, as a senior leader in the program, to show that I wasn't asking them to do anything I wasn't prepared to do."

In November 2012, Geary was one of 21 employees in the division to be awarded a CDMP certificate, with congratulations from WSIB COO John Slinger for her commitment to improving services and providing better outcomes for injured and ill workers.

J.D. Irving has been setting an example for international best practices in wellness and disability management for more than two decades. The company is a world leader in disability management and it trains and certifies its disability management professionals through NIDMAR's program.

Canada Post operates a Disability Man-

■ CDMP CERTIFICATION

Skills and competencies

The Occupational Standards in Disability Management, which formed the basis of the CDMP professional certification examination, include the following major skills and competencies areas:

- disability management theory and practice
- legislation and benefit programs
- labour/management relations
- communication and problem-solving skills
- disability case management
- return-to-work co-ordination
- health, psycho-social, prevention and functional aspects of disability
- program management and evaluation activities
- ethical and professional conduct.

agement Centre of Excellence that is responsible for 60,000 employees across 4,000 locations. All in-house occupational abilities policy managers and disability management regional managers hold the CDMP designation.

In 2010, the centre requested proposals that required external service providers to ensure their managers handling DM services also become certified by the IDMSC.

Ensures mobility

There are considerable opportunities outside Canada's borders for certified professionals in disability management, and their employment mobility is optimized since the CDMP and CRTWC have become the standard in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, China, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malaysia, the Netherlands, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

In the U.K., where the IDMSC designation is the only recognized vocational rehabilita-

tion qualification, there are more than 200 CDMPs from a wide spectrum of organizations. In 2013, individuals from the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund of Namibia achieved the CDMP designation.

As the CDMP designation gains traction

globally, certified members of the Canadian Society of Professionals in Disability Management (CSPDM) are proving innovation and quality assurance start here at home.

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director of NIDMAR and president of the Pacific Coast University for Workplace Health Sciences (PCU-WHS), which will begin offering professional development for CDMPs and CRTWCs in the fall of 2014. He can be reached at wolfgang@nidmar.ca.