

Prevention a Key Factor in Licensing Audit Tool



Public Services Health & Safety Association (PSHSA) of Ontario Licenses CBDMA

In operation less than two years, the Public Services Health & Safety Association (PSHSA) of Ontario might still be considered a fledging organization, but that it's built on the longtime experience of three previous agencies with similar mandates. President & CEO Louise Logan likes to say, "We're a young organization with a lot of history."

On January 1, 2010, the not-for-profit PSHSA was created through the amalgamation of three well-established provincial organizations with lengthy legacies in public service: the Education Safety Association of Ontario, the Municipal Health & Safety Association, and the Ontario Safety Association for Community and Healthcare. Through PSHSA, the three organizations were united under the common goal of preventing illnesses and injuries within Ontario's public service sector responsible for municipalities, First Nations, colleges, universities, school boards, emergency services, and health and community care organizations.

The PSHSA provides on-site prevention training, risk assessment, and safety consulting services to 9,000 public service employers and 1.2 million workers in Ontario. Significantly, consulting on effective disability management has become an added emphasis for the organization.

In April 2011, the PSHSA signed a license agreement with the National Institute of Disability Management and Research (NIDMAR) allowing use of the Consensus Based Disability Management Audit (CBDMA) and the Workplace Disability Management Assessment (WDMA) for one year.

"We're a health and safety organization, but we see the audit as a tool that can benefit our clients as a secondary component of their overall prevention plans," explains Logan. She adds that taking out its own license for the audit/assessment tools is building on the strengths and experience instilled by the three previous legacy organizations. Vice-president of Prevention Services Patti Boucher's background working with NIDMAR in the disability management realm is part of that legacy.

Well-known in Canada's disability management circles, Boucher comes to PSHSA from the Ontario Safety Association for Community and Healthcare (OSACH) and has worked with NIDMAR going back almost 13 years. She is one of the original faculty members for the delivery of NIDMAR's education program through Ontario's Mohawk College and McMaster University, and is now their program manager. In 2009, she played an instrumental role in a tripartite agreement that allowed the OSACH to use the NIDMAR audit tool under an existing license agreement held by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

(WSIB) of Ontario. The CBDMA was used to benchmark assessments in Ontario's healthcare sector that not only proved to be highly beneficial in that province, but also helped in measuring the effectiveness of disability management in British Columbia's healthcare sector.

Boucher says clients were left with action plans to enhance their DM programs. "It gave them a good understanding of the gaps in their programs and helped us customize our services to help them enhance their programs." She adds that based on the audit findings, some clients chose to hire Certified Disability Management Professionals (CDMPs) to administer their programs.

Now, under Logan's guidance—with the impetus of what was learned from the benchmark audits in healthcare—the PSHSA will use its one-year NIDMAR license for the CBDMA to begin a pilot program auditing three major educational institutions in the province.

Logan explains that while the PSHSA's education clients historically have low injury rates, she expects that the audits will help them "develop detailed action plans and the rigorous infrastructure" necessary to allow them to maintain these low levels.

Her hopes are echoed by Boucher. "The audit will allow them to deep dive into their programs to understand any gaps and mitigate risks, so they can implement processes and controls to improve their effectiveness."

Next, the PSHSA plans to extend the audit pilot program to a sampling of Ontario municipalities. According to Logan, the audits will bring welcome benefits. "Our clients like to benchmark how they compare to other organizations and provinces. There are far-reaching benchmarking capabilities to the program and, potentially, internationally as well."

Currently, the PSHSA has one CDMP staff member, who is also a certified CBDMA auditor, and she will conduct the pilot audits. In the meantime, the organization plans to build capacity internally by identifying consultants on staff with skills and experience, and support them in taking the auditor training and gaining the CDMP designation.

Prevention-wise, the PSHSA is actively engaged in a "Road to Zero" campaign aimed at eliminating injuries and illnesses in the workplace. In keeping, Logan sees the audit tool as a key component of a disability management prevention program. She stresses, "The NIDMAR audit is highly focused on prevention and ties in with many fundamental components of the PSHSA's priorities. It's directly linked to the work we do."