

Certified DM Professionals Excel in a Variety of Roles



After writing the professional certification examinations in May 2009, 59 individuals from across Canada successfully achieved the designations of CRTWC and CDMP. In this second of a series, the Bulletin talks to Canada's newly certified professionals about what motivates them, how being certified makes a difference in their careers and what they're planning for the future.



Union president gains added perspective along with designation

Marcy Williamson, CDMP, is the president of the Manitoba Nurses Union Worksite 97 – Winnipeg Home Care Nurses with approximately 450 members, and the vice president for the 1,000-member Winnipeg Regional Nurses. She is solely responsible for all Winnipeg Home Care members return to work meetings and support.

A nurse with a broad, varied background in office administration and management, Williamson is a strong believer in ongoing education.

When she was appointed president of her union, she had no experience in this area and was motivated to pursue the CDMP to gain a deeper perspective and formal background. Due to the varied work environment faced by home care nurses, high numbers of employees are often off work with either workers' compensation claims or Manitoba Public Insurance (i.e. vehicle accidents), or because of personal illness or injuries – in all cases requiring return to work meetings.

Williamson advises, "I took the CDMP to assist me in seeing both sides of disability management to better serve my members, and to better assist them in returning to work in a meaningful, safe and contract-compliant manner."

Since then, the NIDMAR curriculum has helped her job in a variety of ways. "All of it was an eye-opener for me, as this was something I never intended on pursuing. It was extremely helpful to be able to do this online rather than in a classroom setting." She adds, "I am now able to see the whys and hows of disability management from all sides of the program – the insurer, employer and member, as well as the union perspective, which makes for a better working relationship with the employer and the members that I represent."

Now that Williamson is certified in the DM field, she has enjoyed some personal benefits as well. "The employer has recognized my hard work and dedication and has now started paying me, on a trial basis, for attending return to work meetings, which not only helps the employer, it also helps the members in returning to work faster rather than waiting for meetings. It has also helped in knowing that I have a career option to pursue should I decide that nursing is not right for me."

Williamson continues, "Personally, it allows me the option to choose an alternative career path without having to suffer the qualms of returning to a school setting."



If that time should ever come, the transportability of the CDMP designation could also come into play. “At this time with this job, it isn’t extremely important, however should I ever be offered a position elsewhere or my spouse gets transferred elsewhere, it would be very beneficial to know that I have this designation that is recognized internationally.”

She encourages others in the union to consider more training in the DM field. “Although I had no intention of pursuing a career as a CDMP, it has opened many doors for me, and has assisted my members more than ever and I would definitely recommend it or portions of it for other union representatives.”

Achieving designation provides opportunity to broaden understanding of DM

Kyla Smeeton, CRTWC, has changed paths during her seven years at the Yukon Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety Board, originally working in claims as a case manager. Now, in her position as a safety officer in the Occupational Health and Safety division, she chose to pursue a CRTWC designation to “gain experience and understanding of all the roles and all the players involved” in return to work.

With a busy schedule as a working mother, she chose many of the NIDMAR online modules which she took along the way to becoming a CRTWC, based on how well they matched her availability. The flexibility of the online courses was a big plus for her. “I totally enjoyed the freedom it offered and loved getting the instructor’s feedback and hearing from the other students,” she said.

From the modules, she gained some new perspectives as well. “It was a whole new understanding of a unionized approach and it put me in the shoes of return to work from the employer’s side.” She also noted, “There is a broader set of regulations for a return to work coordinator working for an employer, rather than for the workers’ compensation system.”

Smeeton took several modules and then successfully challenged the examination, passing in May 2009. And while she believes the designation will serve her well in the future, she has no plans to leave her safety officer job. She adds that the role of a disability case manager is too fine-tuned for her career plans now, but that the CRTWC allows her to broaden and maximize the return to work aspects of her existing job. “I love this job and want it to grow.”

District school board encouraged designation for credibility

For the past three years, Salvina Bertin, CDMP, has been the disability management coordinator in the Human Resources (HR) Department at the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board in Hamilton, Ontario. She is responsible for supervising the public school board’s disability management staff.



She also holds a Human Resources Certificate and was motivated to pursue the CDMP by the HR Department's executive officer whom she says, "Encouraged pursuing this designation to solidify credibility in the execution of the disability management program." She's pleased she took that route. "NIDMAR has enhanced my knowledge base in disability management, and provided me with a greater, more in-depth knowledge and skill set in identifying various programs, community links and resources to facilitate return to work and accommodation."

Of NIDMAR's education program, she says, "All the modules link and build onto one another and therefore each one has a specific value-add that provided me with information and resources I had not considered." She notes that the most eye-opening modules for her were: Professional Conduct, Managing Change, Legislation and Communication.

Specifically, too, she adds that the modules broadened her perspective in DM to include "consideration for diversity, cultural differences, and many other critical components that may be integral in the development and success of return to work plans." She's proud to be recognized as a CDMP. "When the individual holding the designation executes as the curriculum intends, an employer can take comfort and rest assured that a holistic approach and application of best practices, in an ethical manner, will take place; this speaks volumes to employees in a unionized and non-unionized environment."

Bertin goes on to say, "An international designation confirms that, not only locally, but internationally, the curriculum is recognized for its worth and, again, speaks volumes for credibility. It is a step above any other designation that is being offered, enhancing its return on investment for me, and providing personal and professional gains."

As for her future, Bertin says she would consider future managerial positions, teaching or consulting work where NIDMAR's standards are promoted and encouraged, and where hiring practices "demand this designation."

Ontario case manager adds double DM designations to her educational credentials

Michelle Beehari, CDMP, is a long-term case manager at the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) in Toronto, and has been in her current role for one year. Prior to this, Beehari held the position of return-to-work program specialist at the WSIB where she was instrumental in the development of case management assessment and service plan templates for the Board's New Service Delivery Model.

Previously, Beehari obtained a Bachelor of Arts Honours degree from the University of Toronto with a double major in Psychology and Political Science and a minor in English. She is working on completing a second degree at Ryerson University in Public Administration and Governance.

She holds the CDMP designation and is a Certified CBDMA Auditor, and was motivated to obtain them for a variety of reasons. "I have worked for the WSIB for nine years in a number of roles and disability management has always been at the core of our business. I chose to pursue the CDMP designation, because I felt it would enhance my knowledge and make me a subject matter expert in this exciting field. It also appealed to me because it is internationally recognized."

She found the NIDMAR curriculum "quite thorough," adding that all modules she has taken have been helpful in some aspect of her current position.

As a case manager, she found the modules in Assistive Technology and Accommodation to be particularly helpful, as well as those covering mental health issues, rehabilitation services and return to work coordination. "What I have learned in these modules has helped me assist injured workers and their employers in discussions about return to work, which has led to getting these workers back to safe and sustainable work with their employers, instead of the alternative of having to be retrained for a new job with a new employer."

In terms of her own career, Beehari advises, "I do see added benefits in my current position now that I am certified. I am better able to explain available options to my clients and I am able to reference the research that supports these options."

She also notes the international aspect of the designation was important to her. "It makes me marketable, not only here in Canada, but internationally. If I ever choose to or need to relocate, having an internationally recognized designation would be a valuable asset."

Next up for her at the WSIB, she says, "The duties of my current job are constantly changing, as the role is still quite new. This does keep things interesting. Nevertheless, in the short-term I would love the opportunity to apply my disability management knowledge in the role of a Work Safe Specialist at the WSIB." Personally, along with the other degree she is completing at Ryerson University, Beehari is also working toward a Certificate in Television Writing from the University of California Los Angeles. She'll have a chance to explore LA's bright lights from September 20 to 22 this year. "I am planning to attend the IFDM conference in Los Angeles in 2010 and I am looking forward to it."