



**United
Nations**

**International Day of Persons with
Disabilities, 3 December**

Leadership and participation of persons with disabilities toward an inclusive, accessible and sustainable post-COVID-19 world

On December 3, 2021 we celebrate **International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD)**. This United Nations-sanctioned, internationally recognized day values the diversity of our global community. It is our opportunity to look towards the future and the creation of a world where a person is not characterised by their disabilities, but by their abilities; and to take on a commitment to create a world characterised by equal human rights.

The theme for IDPD in 2021 is **“Leadership and participation of persons with disabilities toward an inclusive, accessible and sustainable post-COVID-19 world.”** People who live with disabilities are among the most affected populations amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Marginalisation, discrimination, vulnerability and exploitation are every day factors for many people with disabilities – and the risk of poor outcomes have increased during the pandemic with the reduced access to routine health care and rehabilitation services, more pronounced social isolation, poorly tailored public health messaging, inadequately constructed mental health services, and a lack of emergency preparedness for people with special needs. As workplaces pivot to meet new public health guidelines, the willingness to introduce additional accommodations for disabled workers is at risk of slipping even further down the priority list.

According to the WHO World Report on Disability, 15 per cent of the world’s population, or more than 1 billion people, are living with disability. A new study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute in partnership with the Rick Hansen Foundation finds that two-in-five (40%) of those living with a disability say that companies fall short when it comes to hiring those who are disabled – a statistic which re-emphasizes the importance of effective Disability Management programs to mitigate the disproportionate levels of poverty experienced by people with a disability. The new reality of workers dealing with the long term effects of COVID-19 adds to the numbers of individuals overcoming illness or injury who need support at work. If an employer isn’t willing to accommodate an employee in returning to the workplace with different abilities, then there is little to no chance of that workplace being open to hiring a disabled candidate.

The National Institute of Disability Management and Research (NIDMAR) joins this international movement to call on public health officials, political representatives, advocates and community members to learn from the experiences of people living with disabilities during this pandemic and create societies and workplaces which are set up to be safe, healthy and accessible for all.

“All of our lives have been turned upside down by COVID-19. As we each struggle with adjusting to new workplace, social and public health guidelines, we can find ourselves pre-occupied by our own situation and overwhelmed by the uncertain path forward. For those who also face additional employment barriers due to differing abilities, the burden can be even greater to overcome. On December 3, 2021, NIDMAR lends its support to the global push for awareness and change – this is our opportunity to come together and call for further research, legislation, investments and support to close the poverty gap and provide a more equitable society. Effective workplace Disability Management programs are an essential element in ensuring social and economic opportunities for people with disabilities. Funding provided by the Government of Canada through the Canada–British Columbia Workforce Development Agreement has accelerated our efforts in BC and we continue to explore new opportunities nationwide.”
– **Wolfgang Zimmermann, OBC, Executive Director, NIDMAR**

NIDMAR is committed to delivering programs to support a culture of accommodation in the workplace, with continued focus on three strategies to support employers to accommodate injured workers to return to work and to increase the number of people with disabilities in the workforce:

- Disability management program assessments and improvement guidance for employers.
- University and Continuing Education opportunities, in partnership with Pacific Coast University for Workplace Health Sciences (PCU-WHS).
- Professionalization through the opportunity to obtain the professional designations: Certified Disability Management Professional (CDMP) and Certified Return to Work Coordinator (CRTWC).

Sources:

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/international-day-of-persons-with-disabilities-3-december/2021-2.html>

<https://www.nidmar.ca/>

<https://www.pcu-whs.ca/>



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3 DECEMBER



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