

## Optimizing Return to Work through Successful Early Intervention

The **Reducing Poverty through Early Intervention and Occupational Rehabilitation Initiative** (RPI) currently being implemented in the Province of BC, with support from the Governments of Canada and British Columbia, is designed to provide a valuable resource with practical policy and program solutions optimized for immediate direct disability case management for individuals, and having potentially longer term structural recommendations for employers.

Individuals and employers supported through this initiative can expect compassionate and professional assistance in identifying concrete options designed to successfully maintain employment for the disabled individual whenever possible. This could include the provision of direct health care support such as occupational therapy or physiotherapy services, etc., as well as assistive technology or ergonomic solutions amongst other options.

With more than 80% of all mental and physical health impairments occurring during someone's working life, successful workplace accommodations designed to maintain equitable participation through continued employment are key in successfully addressing the myriad of challenges often associated with long-term unemployment such as financial hardship, poverty, psychological and social distress.

The Return to Work / Disability Management expertise required for achieving these often ambitious goals is provided through Certified Disability Management Professionals (CDMPs) who have met internationally recognized *Occupational Standards* in this field and successfully passed a rigorous 6 hour examination, which is built in accordance to a strictly defined ISO standard.

The strategy of early intervention and occupational rehabilitation supports provided by CDMPs forms a key element in the Belgian Government's federal Disability Management efforts now enshrined through a legislative framework in Belgium since January 2022; a strategy which is also currently being considered in other jurisdictions.

While this early intervention pilot initiative taking place in BC will certainly be available to any individual or employer seeking Return to Work and accommodation solutions, it is expected that individuals with little or no other organizational support and no workers compensation, ICBC, or long-term disability support, would find employment support resources through this new initiative most valuable.

In order to ensure maximum benefit and optimized outcomes for British Columbians while at the same time creating a valuable and successful pilot model with significant implementation potential for other jurisdictions, an Executive Leadership Committee, with senior level national and multi-stakeholder representation, and chaired by former BC Minister for Social Development & Poverty Reduction, Shane Simpson, has been established to guide, support and advise on the many aspects of this unique effort.

For additional details as they become available, please monitor the NIDMAR website as follows:  
[www.nidmar.ca](http://www.nidmar.ca)

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