



PACIFIC COAST UNIVERSITY  
FOR WORKPLACE HEALTH SCIENCES



# **Global Professional and Program Standards in Return to Work and Disability Management**

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## Historic challenges

- High levels of unemployment / associated poverty for persons with disabilities (1.2 million in Canada today)
- A social, economic and public policy conundrum for governments around the world
- Led to diverse range of program, policy and legislative interventions
- 0.65% – 0.85% annual outflow rate from disability social security



## Challenges in 1970's and 1980's

- Increasing disability benefit costs
- Move towards knowledge economy
- Advancing global economy / increased competitiveness
- Escalating technology applications



## Leadership by companies, governments, unions

- Pilot projects in early intervention / RTW by self-insured employers
- Unique WCB legislation (COMCARE Australia)
- Innovative collective agreement language (Teck/Cominco & USW)



## Early results included

- Significantly lowered disability related costs
- Retention of valuable workers in a knowledge economy
- Reduced inflow into social security system
- Building a “workplace culture of accommodation” regardless of impairment causation



## Socio-economic achievements through

- Early intervention, case management and causation-specific accommodation strategies
- Reduced claim duration
- Significantly lowered LTD rates
- Reduction in indirect disability-related admin. costs, incl. replacement and training costs



## Codification of key success elements

- ILO Job Retention & RTW Strategies Study (1998)
- ILO Code of Practice on Managing Disability in the Workplace (2002)
- Development of Occupational Standards, best practice Professional and Program Standards in DM / RTW, principally supported through Government of Canada (1998 – 2003)
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008)
- International Social Security Association (ISSA) best practice Guidelines on Return to Work & Reintegration (2013)



## **ILO Job Retention & RTW Strategies Study (1998)**

- Nine country study reviewed job retention, disability employment policies, benefit compensation programs, rehab & employment support services, adaptation of work / workplace, enterprise and other developing strategies
- Canada and USA
- Australia and New Zealand
- France, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, United Kingdom



## **Disability Management in Context**

### **What is a Disability Management (DM) Program?**

Defined by the ILO, a DM program is a program in the workplace designed to facilitate the (re)integration of people with disabilities through a coordinated effort.

Return to Work (RTW) is a process by which an employee is supported in resuming work after an absence due to injury or illness.



## **DM Programs are grounded in economic and social imperatives**

Global business rationale:

- Every 15 seconds – a worker dies from a work-related accident or disease
- Every 15 seconds – 153 workers have a work-related accident
- Every day – 6,300 workers die from a work-related accident or disease – 2.3 million each year
- 317 million occupational accidents each year
- Economic burden – 4% of global GDP



## Across Canada

In 2014:

- 239,462 lost-time accidents
- 919 fatal accidents / occupational disease
- Ratio of permanent disabilities to fatalities – 30:1
- Cost of disability related absence – \$16.6 billion or 2.4% of gross national payroll



## Across Canada

- Mental health related impairments on the rise
- In any given week, at least 500,000 employed Canadians are unable to work due to mental health problems
- Economic burden of mental illness in Canada estimated at \$51 billion each year
- Nearly 4,000 Canadians die by suicide each year – an average of almost 11 per day
- Suicide rate for unemployed persons with disabilities approx. 40 times average population



## Across Canada

- Approx. 330,000 individuals collecting CPP-D (average benefit / month = \$928.08)
- Employment rate for persons with disabilities in the federally regulated sector = 2.7%
- Hiring rate for persons with disabilities in the federally regulated sector = 1.6%
- Terminations during the same time frame = 2.6%



## What are the issues around the world?

- Economic / competitive
- Labour market / demographic changes
- Social justice
- Legislative



## What can we achieve with effective DM programs?

- Reduce the socio-economic impact of disabling conditions on employers, workers and society
- Increase competitive position of businesses through cost reduction and increased productivity
- Maximize employer attachment for individuals who acquire a disabling condition
- Increase the labour force participation of people with disabilities



## What can we achieve with effective DM programs?

### Bill C-81 – The Accessible Canada Act

The number one priority identified by people with disabilities was: employment.

From the December 2019 “Disability and Work in Canada” conference in Ottawa:

The Honourable Carla Qualtrough, federal Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, credited DWC for making the link between accommodating injured workers, with which employers are more familiar, and employing persons with disabilities.

“I thought, ‘What a strategically innovative way to get employers comfortable with disability,’ she said. ‘I think we’re going to be able to talk about inclusion and disability and accommodation a little differently now because of the work you’re doing.’”



## What can we achieve with effective DM programs?

- Address current labour market issues:
  - increasing mental health issues
  - aging workforce
  - reduced labour force availability



## DM in Context

What can be accomplished with DM?

- Reduce disability-related expenditures by 30 – 50%
- Reduce LTD uptake by up to 50%
- Generate a ROI of \$10 : \$1
- Maintain attachment to pre-disability employer



## DM in Context

What major challenges often influence DM success?

- Structural barriers
- Individual circumstances
- Attitudinal and perceptual factors
- Benefit / insurance program design and delivery
- Statutory framework



## Universal Key Success Factors

- Injury prevention and safety programs
- Health promotion and wellness programs
- Early intervention, combined with formal RTW programs
- Policies and procedures jointly endorsed by labour and management
- Benefit program design
- Internal and external communications systems



## Universal Key Success Factors

- Education
- Transitional work options
- Workplace accommodations
- Identification of key workplace personnel
- Accountability
- Regulation
- Supportive enterprise cultures



## Development of Occupational Standards



**cdmp**<sup>TM</sup> certified disability  
management  
professional



**crtwc**<sup>TM</sup> certified  
return to work  
coordinator

### Essential Skills and Competencies

- Disability management theory and practice
- Legislation and benefit programs
- Labour-management relations
- Communication and problem-solving skills
- Disability case management
- Return to work coordination
- Health, psycho-social, prevention and functional aspects of disability
- Program evaluation
- Ethical and professional conduct



## Elements

- Joint worker-management support and empowerment
- Responsibility, accountability and authority
- Workplace culture and policy development
- Information and communication management
- Benefit design and influences
- Knowledge and skills of the DM practitioner
- Accident prevention and safety programs
- Occupational ergonomics



## Elements

- Health promotion and wellness
- Injury, disability and lost time patterns
- Disability cost benefit data
- Early intervention and worker communication protocol
- Case management procedures
- Return to work coordination
- Transitional work options
- Workplace accommodations



**CBDVIA™**  
consensus based disability management audit



**WDVIA™**  
workplace disability management assessment

## Scores at a Glance

	Element Name	Unit Score	National Industry Average	Global Industry Average
Element 1	Joint Worker-Management Support and Empowerment	76.8%	75%	71.8%
Element 2	Responsibility, Accountability and Authority	91.7%	67.7%	59.7%
Element 3	Workplace Culture and Policy Development	49.2%	51.7%	50.6%
Element 4	Information and Communication Management	77.9%	54%	60%
Element 5	Benefit Design and Influences	52.5%	53.1%	58.3%
Element 6	Knowledge and Skills of the Disability Management Practitioner	100%	81.2%	81.9%
Element 7	Accident Prevention and Safety Programs	89.5%	82%	81.9%
Element 8	Occupational Ergonomics	84.4%	59.4%	57.3%
Element 9	Health Promotion and Wellness	50%	56.2%	66.7%
Element 10	Injury, Disability and Lost Time Patterns	79.2%	64.6%	64.4%
Element 11	Disability Cost Benefit Data	70.8%	52.6%	50.7%
Element 12	Early Intervention and Worker Communication Protocol	86.5%	72.1%	68.2%
Element 13	Case Management Procedures	79.2%	64.6%	66.2%
Element 14	Return to Work Coordination	76.9%	67.3%	63.7%
Element 15	Transitional Work Options	86.1%	79.5%	73.6%
Element 16	Workplace Accommodations	87.5%	70.5%	61.3%
Final Score		79.9%	68%	65.4%



## Business case for a global re-design

Corporate leadership placed emphasis on DM as a strategy to:

- Lessen lost workdays
- Enhance productivity
- Decrease WCB premiums through safety and accident prevention
- Retain experienced workers and their skill sets
- Achieve compliance with Duty to Accommodate legislation for both occupational and non-occupational cases
- Enhance employee satisfaction



## **Business case for a global re-design**

New DM strategy incorporated the following:

- Stronger focus on RTW for non-occupational absences
- No distinction between occ. and non-occ. absences for DM/RTW
- Held business units accountable for RTW to reduce the number of productive days lost, while reigning in the spiralling costs of disability



## **Business case for a global re-design**

Core program goals established:

- Significant decrease in number of employees injured on the job
- Increase in the rate of return to work with fewer lost days
- Improvement in quality of services provided to injured workers
- Reduction in WCB costs



## Business case for a global re-design

Adoption of fundamental principles:

- Courage to care for each other at work by lending assistance to employees in RTW
- Treating all employees with dignity and respect
- Providing injured employees access to highest quality standard of care
- Creating a partnership among employees, health service providers and benefit providers with shared commitment to return the injured/ill employee to work



## Business case for a global re-design

Adoption of fundamental principles:

- Make reasonable efforts to provide suitable available employment to an employee who is unable to return to normal duties
- Develop RTW programs at each business unit with goal of returning employees absent due to occ. or non-occ. illness or injury to meaningful and productive work, in a safe and timely manner
- Hold managers responsible for upholding these DM principles



## Business case for a global re-design

Adoption of fundamental principles:

- DM/RTW processes to be as transparent as possible
- Each employee empowered to play an important role in ensuring safe operations, preventing illness, injury and disability, and being part of RTW solutions and required accommodations



## Business case for a global re-design

### Re-design key principles:

- One-company approach focusing on best practices across organizational boundaries
- Clear linkage with safety – company's #1 priority
- Standardized DM process with clearly defined responsibilities
- Clearly defined, unit-based, RTW program
- End-to-end DM process for all units across North America
- Single point of DM/RTW contact for all employees/managers
- Process to manage LTD cases when RTW not possible
- Improve management/interface with third-party vendors
- Improve tracking/reporting system to measure cost/performance



## Business case for a global re-design

Outcomes established:

- Improve productive relationship with ill, injured and disabled employees
- Achieve 25% reduction in lost productive workdays due to illness or injury
- Reduce litigation arising from disability cases (in the U.S.)
- Achieve an overall cost reduction of 25%



## **Business case for a global re-design**

Centre of Excellence established:

- The DM Centre of Excellence brought together core group of HR specialists working in DM to be the focal point for all DM processes and transactions
- This core group answered questions, kept track of everyone off work and for how long, helped to minimize frustrations, and reduced the processing time for STD and LTD benefits



## Business case for a global re-design

### Results:

- Reduction in number of productive days lost by 12,000 days
- 47% reduction in duration of claims and 39% reduction in cost of claims – represented \$4.8 million decrease in WCB claim costs



## **Enhanced Disability Management Program (EDMP)**

The EDMP was jointly developed in the health care sector in BC between employers/unions and providers for joint program governance, sets out regular reviews and monitoring of individuals and is intended to provide a more seamless process for employees returning to work or requiring support from the Long Term Disability (LTD) Plan.

The EDMP is part of the collective agreement and provides proactive support to help employees' timeline and safe recovery when they are absent from work or struggling at work due to an illness or injury.

The EDMP applies across the whole health care sector in BC involving over 200 employers, 4 unions and covers over 150,000 workers.



## **Enhanced Disability Management Program (EDMP)**

The following is from the BCNU website:

The EDMP is a pro-active, customized disability management program. It is designed to support members suffering from an occupational or non-occupational illness or injury. EDMP participants will have a holistic case management plan that may include medical intervention, transitional work, a graduated return to work, workplace modifications and vocational rehabilitation or training.

It is designed to help you when you are absent from work, or struggling at work due to an occupational or non-occupational illness or injury. This may include medical, personal, workplace and/or vocational issues.



## Enhanced Disability Management Program (EDMP)

The EDMP focuses on your quick and safe recovery with a proactive and customized disability management program that helps you to either stay at work or successfully return to work.

Participation is required for all full-time and part-time employees covered by the facilities subsector collective agreement who have:

- missed one shift due to workplace illness or injury, or
- missed five consecutive shifts due to a non work-related illness or injury



## Enhanced Disability Management Program (EDMP)

The EDMP involves support from a Disability Management Professional and the union's EDMP representative.

The employee's customized plan may include:

- Support and services to address medical, personal, workplace and vocational barriers;
- Quicker access to medical and rehabilitation services;
- Access to diagnostic services or treatments not covered by MSP or extended health plans;
- Return to work options: temporary assignments, flexible work, duty modifications, or alternate/sedentary work.



## Resources

NIDMAR – [www.nidmar.ca](http://www.nidmar.ca)

PCU-WHS – [www.pcu-whs.ca](http://www.pcu-whs.ca)

ILO Code of Practice on managing disability in the workplace

[https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/safety-and-health-at-work/normative-instruments/code-of-practice/WCMS\\_107777/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/safety-and-health-at-work/normative-instruments/code-of-practice/WCMS_107777/lang--en/index.htm)

ISSA Guidelines: Return to Work and Reintegration –

<https://ww1.issa.int/guidelines/rtw>

The Accessible Canada Act (Bill C-81)

<https://www.parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/bill/C-81/royal-assent>