

CRTWC designation advances opportunities



Certification required for WSIB specialty clinic employees at the UHN

Laura Wentzell already has a string of credentials behind her name including Hon.B.Sc. (Bachelor of Science with Honours), CK (Certified Kinesiologist) and now CRTWC. She proudly earned the designation Certified Return to Work Coordinator (CRTWC) in 2007, which also now doubles as her job title at the University Health Network (UHN) Rehabilitation Solutions.

UHN Rehab Solutions provides services to injured workers in Ontario, mainly through its affiliation with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) and the WSIB Specialty Programs. Generally, these workers have experience musculoskeletal injuries (traumatic and non-traumatic) and/or have chronic pain disorders, and are experiencing barriers to return to work. A multidisciplinary assessment team including an orthopaedic surgeon, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, in some cases a psychologist, and a return to work coordinator develop a care plan and make recommendations to the worker and the WSIB Service Delivery Team regarding a safe and sustainable return to work plan.

UHN Rehab Solutions has mandated that all its return to work coordinators (RTWCs), such as Wentzell, working in the area of return to work coordination and planning, including the WSIB Specialty Programs, become certified. Laura is the second on staff to earn the CRTWC. Nine other members will be encouraged to earn their designations.

Wentzell notes that her role includes a thorough assessment of all factors related to return to work, from the client, employer and referral source perspective. Following the initial assessment with the client and approval by WSIB, Wentzell's role is to facilitate and coordinate a viable return to work plan.

Given her direct involvement with employers, Wentzell has found the education modules she completed on the way to earning the CRTWC designation are proving valuable in dealing with employers – in unexpected ways. “The conflict resolution module was very helpful. Besides that, the WCB module opened up my mind and broadened my perspective about the employer's point of view in areas like costs and union interaction.”



She adds, "I know where they're coming from and can identify the barriers. The course has made me better at that."

She sees the added credibility of certification as another major benefit for her clients and her career. "It is the gold standard. Clients know you are on top of the guidelines, the standards and ethics. Everything that goes along with that helps grow the profession by leaps and bounds."

The next step, says Wentzell, is more research. "UHN Rehabilitation Solutions has obtained a WSIB grant as the Center of Research Excellence in Improved Disability Management (CREIDO)". It will be the work of CREIDO to develop return to work intervention mapping and determine the outcomes related to services provided by RTWCs.

In the meantime, additional RTWCs at UHN Rehab Solutions will be preparing to sit the examinations in 2008 aiming, like Wentzell has done, to become experts in the field of return to work.

Automotive plant benefits from in-house CRTWC's services

Mary Ann Edmondstone is a Certified Return to Work Coordinator at Henniges Automotive (formerly GDX Automotive) in Welland, Ontario. She wrote and passed the CRTWC examination in May 2007 after completing NIDMAR's 25 modules.

"The education courses cover a great spectrum of topics with a lot of real, useful and practical information. It's nice to have the courses to fall back on. It's a continuous process to apply all the training."

Edmondstone, who holds a Hon.B.Sc. and M.Sc., both in Kinesiology, and is also a Certified Kinesiologist (CK), previously worked as a service provider to insurance companies preparing analyses for decision-makers. She was hired initially at GDX Automotive in a similar role to prepare physical demands analyses (PDAs) on all the jobs in the plant. Having the PDAs was vital to making return to work decisions for employees with restrictions. The company typically sees a lot of upper extremity injuries from jobs requiring repetitive pushing and pulling.

Gradually, Edmondstone's job evolved and she became a link between medical practitioners and the plant floor, working with designated union reps and management. A company HR manager encouraged her to strengthen her role further by pursuing the CRTWC designation.



“Certification was the final seal,” she says. “During the time of taking my courses, I definitely had more confidence in performing my duties. Certification brings recognition outside the plant, particularly with claims adjudicators and people in the healthcare community.”

Edmondstone has also benefited from sharing ideas with colleagues across Canada in the return to work field.

“For me personally, I enjoyed the heated discussions online more than anything else and it’s been great to be involved with people sharing their ideas. NIDMAR and the CSPDM (Canadian Society of Professionals in Disability Management) are doing great work to promote the field. It’s exciting to be part of the leading edge.”

In the meantime, her work at Henniges has been expanding. She is taking on more work in the related field of injury prevention. Consulting with engineers and designers at the early stages to prevent injury is now a new and rewarding branch of her job.

Major Manitoba telecommunications client endorses certification

Winnipeg-based Rehabilitation Facilitator Des Hathaway has worked for Occupational Rehabilitation Group of Canada for four years. He holds a BA and is a Registered Rehabilitation Professional (RRP), adding the CRTWC designation to his achievements last spring.

At the Occupational Rehabilitation Group of Canada he works with three major contracts that take up 90 percent of his time; these are in the telecommunications, mining and government liquor retail industries. His consulting role encompasses return to work and disability management plans, as well as advising on short-term disability, workers’ compensation and policy procedures.

His major telecommunications client has long been involved with NIDMAR and made it clear it was important for Hathaway to become certified.

“It’s been the best thing for me,” says Hathaway laughing. “I’m indispensable now.” Half-kidding, he explains that he came into his job with a lot of vocational rehabilitation experience, but now the modules have brought his knowledge up to date, particularly in the legislation and compensation realms.



He has seen a change since he became certified in that he has become the senior consultant for return to work. "All DM matters now flow through me. The principals among my clients are coming to me."

Hathaway has experienced first-hand the growth potential and benefits afforded through certification. Next, he hopes to become a certified auditor and plans to sit the CDMP examination this May.

Of his plans in 2008, he adds, "The employer stands behind me. It's reassuring to have these new opportunities."

May 28 is the date for the 2008 certification examinations

The 2008 certification examinations will be held on May 28 at various locations across Canada.

For further details, please check the website at: www.nidmar.ca or contact NIDMAR at:

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