



Acclaim emphasizes the “ability” in Disability Management



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The designations of Certified Return to Work Coordinator (CRTWC) and Certified Disability Management Professional (CDMP), administered under the auspices of the International Disability Management Standards Council (IDMSC), are increasingly becoming the accepted standard for disability management practice worldwide.

National company Acclaim Ability Management Inc. has fully embraced the NIDMAR model for getting ill and injured employees back into the workplace, according to Vice President for Operations, Dawn Yearwood-Weekes.

The company, which was incorporated in 1993 as Acclaim-SBA Disability Management, re-branded itself in 2006 to reflect an evolving corporate approach. That same year, Yearwood-Weekes successfully completed her own CDMP certification. “There were three of us who wrote the examination. I don’t think there were many people certified at that time,” she said.

Yearwood-Weekes said Acclaim serves as a “customized and inclusive” provider of DM services for employers, processing work-related or non-work-related claims through worker’s compensation boards and/or insurance companies, including auto insurance. “We receive notification of the claim, the documentation with which to determine eligibility to benefits, case-manage and facilitate the return to work process,” she explained.

The company also has a clinical services division, which provides occupational therapy assessments, ergonomic/functional abilities evaluations, in-home assessments and independent medical evaluations for a number of carriers and auto insurers.

The direct client work is performed by Acclaim’s Ability Management Consultants (AMCs), who are direct employees of the company. Yearwood-Weekes said these AMCs bring a wide range of skills, and many are cross-trained to provide both clinical support to the client and/or case management on the employer side. For Acclaim, NIDMAR training and certification is now a requirement. And it is has been very beneficial, she added.

“Our clients come to us not only because our staff have their own specific designations – RNs, certified kinesiologists, social workers or occupational therapists – that are governed by their own colleges, but they also have DM-specific certifications, which provide people with a sense of comfort and an assurance that they are receiving the highest quality of DM service.”

Yearwood-Weekes said Acclaim’s goal is to have all its Employer Services staff certified. More junior employees may choose to pursue the Certified Return To Work Coordinator certification, which does not focus on program development, as a starting point. To enter the higher echelons, CDMP certification is a must. “The last examination was May 2013. We had a group of eight successfully complete the examinations.”

Yearwood-Weekes’ own career path at Acclaim illustrates the value the company places on continuing education and certification. After graduating from the University of Ottawa with a BSc (Honours) in



Human Kinetics in 1999, she was hired as a Kinesiologist with Active Health Management, where she worked until 2002. That year, she joined Acclaim-SBA as an AMC, and became a Quality Assurance Manager the following year.

In 2008, the same year she completed her Certified Consensus Based Disability Management Auditor certification, she was promoted to Director of Operations, and in 2013, Vice President of Operations.

Yearwood-Weekes said Acclaim is working towards having its whole leadership team undertake certification. “Our team leads are all CDMP-certified as well as our directors.”

Acclaim is a privately owned company with three equal shareholders at the helm. “Tony Fasulo, President and CEO, holds both the CDMP and Certified CBDMA Auditor designations,” Yearwood-Weekes noted. Fasulo is the visionary behind Acclaim’s adoption of the professional certification as a corporate standard and also spearheaded Acclaim’s sponsorship of Pacific Coast University for Workplace Health Sciences. Students who come to Acclaim on internships and those who are subsequently hired are encouraged to pursue NIDMAR training as a priority.

“For newcomers who have chosen this as a vocation, professional certification allows them that one step further to strive for. It gives them credentialing within the industry, and employers and clients want that. Certification gives clients a sense of security and the confidence that we’re extremely competent and will provide them with services in line with globally respected professional standards. By being associated with NIDMAR, we are abreast of the latest industry news, research and changes.”

Yearwood-Weekes said Acclaim develops and cultivates its young employees knowing that their skills sets are in high demand, and that the professional designations are recognized worldwide. “Not everyone is a long-term employee, but we don’t have a high turnover rate. Acclaim is a great place to work, with lots of room for growth and movement.”