



CDMP a good fit – anywhere on your career trajectory



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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.

Three individuals who achieved the CDMP professional certification in 2014 in Canada illustrate how there's never a bad time to add the CDMP designation to one's resume.

One candidate working in an academic environment didn't originally intend to write the exam but soon realized the value of having the additional credentials. Another, who works in healthcare, made a decision to take the training and write the exam so that she would be able to work anywhere in Canada. And for the third candidate, who works in law enforcement, the CDMP was a job requirement, pure and simple.

Brendan Hickey is a Disability Advisor at the University of Calgary. Originally from Nova Scotia, he moved west to attend university and has remained in Alberta ever since. The University handles short-term disability in-house so that an employee who is off work for an extended medical leave would have access to a salary continuance plan. "My role here is to work with the employee and their physician, understand their medical situation and help them get back to work or assist with an accommodation. There is certainly that case management component within this role."

Hickey began his career in the insurance industry, where he worked as a case manager and became aware of the certification and recognized the potential immediately. But at first, Hickey said he had no intention of completing the CDMP certification process. He just wanted to take some of the specific training in the NIDMAR modules. As he undertook the training, however, some practical considerations helped change his mind. "Over time, I decided I might as well get the recognition for it and keep some doors open down the road," he said.

He had already learned that in the university environment, degrees and certifications take on a greater importance. "It just made sense to go forward and finalize the accreditation piece to add to my credibility within this field."

Hickey, who first trained as a kinesiologist, noted that the CDMP was not a requirement for his U of Cal position, per se. "But we certainly look for people with rehab/disability backgrounds – kinesiologists and RNs, and there are other certifications out there like the Voc Rehab Assoc. There is a certain skill set you look for in disability management. It's not mandatory, but the CDMP and CRTWC are now the standards nationwide."

Prior to Hickey writing the CDMP exam, he pursued completing some of the NIDMAR modules. "Certainly, if I had felt deficient in any of the areas, I would have taken more modules. But I felt I had enough exposure to the core domain areas, such as unionized environments, insurance models, etc. I felt with my combined education, experience and background, I had seen enough that I could successfully challenge the exam."



As far as how the CDMP will improve his career prospects, Hickey said it's a little too soon to tell. "It's nice to have the certification in my back pocket and to be able to network with other CDMPs and be connected to the NIDMAR community."

Anik Marchand is a disability manager at Irving Health Services, working out of the regional office in Clair, New Brunswick. When she was first exposed to the field of DM, something clicked. "When I started at J.D. Irving, I was hired as a Disability, Wellness and Training Administrator. Basically, I was entering claims for the disability managers, writing letters and learning that new world."

Despite having a Bachelor's degree in Human Resources (Université du Québec à Rimouski), with an added focus on Health and Safety, Marchand said she had never encountered this specific discipline. "It was certainly not something I'd ever heard of in high school. It was all new and it sounded very interesting to me. That's where it started."

At the time Marchand was hired, one of the disability managers had just achieved the CDMP, and spoke highly about the program. So after one year in HR with the Hardwood and Cedar Division at J.D. Irving, she accepted the opportunity to become a disability manager. "It was under the condition that I successfully complete the certification program. At Irving Health Services, all disability managers are either certified or they are doing the certification program."

Marchand's area of responsibility includes Irving's sawmill and woodlands operations in the largely Francophone region of upper New Brunswick, plus transportation operations extending into Quebec and Ontario. As a bilingual Francophone who was raised in the region, she routinely works in both languages. "I did the certification in English, which is my second language. The rest of the team at Irving Health Services are English. Most of my claims are French except for the claims I have in Ontario. As a result, the majority of the medical information received is in French."

In the course of her workday, Marchand might receive a French medical document, but should that report need a medical opinion from the Irving corporate physician, it must be translated into English. Marchand had the option of taking some of the training modules in French, but with such a high concentration of her work being done in English, she decided to train in her second language. On one hand, she explained, she had already become more comfortable using English DM terminology. On the other hand, she knew that doing all the technical reading in English would take her a little longer than in French, in the same way it was taking her a little longer to write case studies in English.

Marchand said co-workers had advised her that the CDMP exam would make for a long, stressful day. That's without the added concern that she might encounter some unfamiliar English terminology in the course of the written test. On top of that, the bilingual candidate made the decision to complete the last leg of her certification training as well as write the examination while on maternity leave.



With her CDMP now in hand, Marchand says she now has an opportunity to take on greater responsibilities as she gains more experience in the field. As a result of the regionalization process undertaken by the Company, she is now gaining new experiences by working with both the CSST in Quebec and the WSIB in Ontario. While she says she has no intention of leaving J.D. Irving, Marchand knows her horizons within the company now extend well beyond New Brunswick.

Patricia Farrington is Program Advisor for Disability Management for the Ontario Provincial Police, based in Orillia. Her main role is to act as a subject matter expert within the entire OPP DM portfolio, but there are occasions where she works directly with claimants. “The HR advisors here work directly with the managers on the case management pieces, and I am their resource for complex cases.”

Farrington grew up in Bradford, Ontario, and obtained her Licensed Practical Nursing certification at Georgian College (she is still currently a Registered Practical Nurse). She began her career working in both hospitals and insurance companies, where she began doing insurance claim adjudication, learning the business as she went along. “There were insurance exams you could take, but nothing about adjudication. In most of the places I worked in, I was the only one with a nursing background, which was an asset.”

Farrington went to work for the Ontario government doing disability management, beginning in Correctional Services and subsequently shifting over to OPP. Farrington said obtaining her CDMP was an OPP requirement. She completed 24 NIDMAR modules prior to undertaking the exam and says, quite frankly, that with 20 years working in the field, there were few surprises.

Asked if she would recommend the program to other professionals, Farrington said she was of two minds. “For people that haven’t had multiple years of experience performing the job duties, it is certainly worth it. While it does provide perspectives that I have considered in my role, I’m not sure it provided me with any information that I wasn’t already aware of, even at a high level.”

But for professionals in the field of DM, it is a constant learning experience. In a law enforcement environment, front line officers must keep apprised of the latest court decisions in order to enforce the law. The folks who look after sick and injured OPP staff have to be equally vigilant, Farrington said. And as a subject matter expert who is now CDMP certified, that is her job. “I feel like I will never be out of work,” she said.

“There are always new and challenging situations and more complex situations, with ever-evolving case law to consider. I will always be one step behind, because the case law changes quicker than anybody can keep up.”