



HRPAO



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### Training & Development

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#### How Do You Train a Team?

##### Hydro One uses time, education and experience

At Hydro One, recovering from disability is a team effort. Rehabilitation advisors, occupational health nurses, occupational physicians, compensation and benefits officers and preferred providers all help assist employees get back to work. Recently, this team met to brainstorm ways to further improve results and identified official training as a top priority, particularly as Hydro One was moving toward an integrated approach, proposing to treat all disabilities the same way.

The team had already dramatically improved the Ontario Workplace Safety and Insurance Board results year over year, reducing the human and financial costs of workers' compensation and taking time lost due to accidents from 24.5 days in 1998 to 8.8 days in 2002. Now, they wanted to take things to a higher level. Secondly, the National Institute for Disability Management and Research (NIDMAR) had just announced the new international certification for return-to-work co-ordinators and disability management professionals—a credential many of the members of this team were interested in pursuing. The group had attended seminars in the past, but overall felt that they were too brief, expensive and did not result in the desired credentials.

So with the objectives clearly established as developing knowledge, skills and capabilities in the area of best practices in integrated disability management, they set out to explore methods of commencing a multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder seminar-based model. It needed to accommodate for various backgrounds, including rehabilitation advisors, department managers, union employees and occupational health learning needs. Web-based approaches, full-, part-time, one night per week certificates and degree programs were all explored. But when they found the National Institute for Disability Management and Research (NIDMAR) certificate program delivered through Mohawk College, their quest was over. This program was based on "the implementation of workplace-based integration programs." And the adoption of this training program provided some preparatory education for the new return-to-work co-ordinator certification exams, while allowing flexibility in delivery methods.

In order to meet various learning needs, styles and backgrounds, all participants completed a brief summary of their background prior to the modules. The modules were then further adjusted to accommodate for learning levels. Mohawk College selected a wide variety of guest speakers that were known as leaders in the industry and knowledgeable in specific areas. The instructors came from a variety of backgrounds, creating a diversity of thought and styles for the participants. The instructors also remained available for comments and questions following the sessions, providing the participants with a network of approachable leaders in the field.

Although there were courses available with other groups, the decision was made to hold it only with Hydro One employees, so case studies could be specific to the



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company and its field. Each module had an evaluation process to assist the participants in assimilating the knowledge they had learned. Initially, the thought had been to do some of the 25 courses online—however, the face-to-face interaction was such a valuable secondary benefit that the online modules were switched to the classroom.

The program was designed to bring all parties together for two to three days per month, in order to learn the key concepts of disability management, with a completion goal period of one year. The use of external facilitators helped to create a level playing field, with even the department manager positioning himself as “just another student.”

The model brought together a solid team with the same base knowledge. It also brought health services and rehabilitation staff closer to the field and increased understanding of the complex challenges that may arise in “real life.” Managers more fully understood the frustrations of those in the field and how they could help. Finally, working together provided an opportunity for team members to get to know each other’s styles, and familiarity always assists in working relationships. In the words of one participant, “You can’t spend 27 days together without getting to know someone.”

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