Workers' Comp

2022 Catastrophic Heart of Case Management Award Winner

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Louisville, KY

Kellie Harrell, RN, BSN, CCM

Unlike her predecessors, Kellie Harrell's award-winning case did not center around one injured employee, but several in responding to a mass casualty incident. A facility, with more than 100 employees in the building, was destroyed by a natural disaster. The devastating event resulted in eight fatalities as rescue crews continued to free dozens of employees from debris. To handle the number of injured, employees were taken to five hospitals in the area. Harrell received survivors at three hospitals working with up to 10 injured employees at a time. She continued communication with the branch to ensure the adjuster and employer received up-to-date information regarding their employees, while supporting family members through the crisis. She worked weekends, sometimes putting in as much as 16 hours a day to ensure continuity of care. The injured employees she managed sustained various degrees of injury from burns to crush injuries. To complicate matters, all of Harrell's claimants had been diagnosed with rhabdomyolysis, a serious medical condition brought on by lying under heavy debris for several hours. The condition can often become fatal or lead to permanent disability. Underlying conditions also posed problems for some of the injured, such as cardiac disorders and diabetes. Harrell continued to work with hospital staff and specialists, coordinating discharge, home health needs, and future follow up with providers. She continued to provide field case management by coordinating and attending visits with specialists to establish and complete treatment plans. As her claimants' physical injuries improved, they were faced with another daunting challenge, overcoming anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress in returning to work. To help them cope, Harrell recommended support groups and identified those individuals who would require additional mental health services and coping mechanisms. Through her monumental efforts, Harrell enabled most of the employees in her caseload to return to full duty ahead of schedule, resulting in significant cost savings and, most importantly, resumption of functional ability.

See how Harrell guided 10 survivors of a natural disaster back to productive lives.

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