Workers' Comp

# 2022 Disability Heart of Case Management Award Winner

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## MINNEAPOLIS, MN

### Nicole Kunde, CPDM

A 54-year-old mechanic experienced respiratory distress due to worsening COVID symptoms. The man was admitted to his local hospital for supplemental oxygen therapy. Genex case manager Nicole Kunde was assigned to the case where she coordinated home health treatment to support continuance of care including ventilator assistance. During one of the visits, the home health nurse indicated the man's blood pressure had spiked to significantly high levels. Through ongoing communication, the employee felt comfortable with Kunde and disclosed his medical history of cardiac arrest with subsequent stent placement. Armed with this knowledge and realizing his health status was not positively progressing, Kunde made appropriate referral to both cardiology and pulmonology specialists. While awaiting these appointments, the employee's health took a turn for the worse resulting in repeat hospitalization. Labs and diagnostic testing revealed a new diagnosis of stage 3 lung cancer. Recognizing the seriousness of the situation, Nicole promptly referred it to Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) confident the case would be approved as a compassionate allowance condition. The SSDI was approved, and this quick action avoided overpayment of short-term disability benefits as the SSDI applied as an offset to the wage replacement benefit. Nicole utilized resources to benchmark estimated length of disability to include comorbidities and worked collaboratively with the employee to establish goals. Both the employee and his spouse have been very appreciative of services provided pertaining to additional income, supplemental resources, and coordination of long-term benefits in case there are any further setbacks.

Watch Kunde describe how her actions helped a critically ill employee reach his highest level of functioning.

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