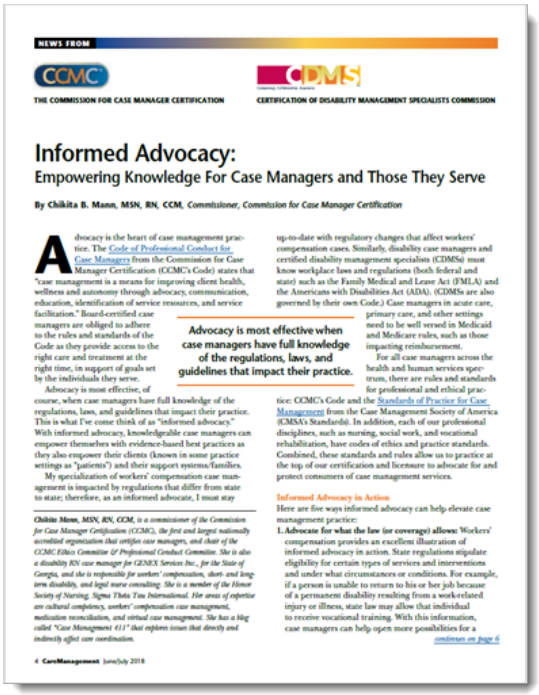
Workers' Comp

Care Management: Empowering Knowledge For Case Managers and Those They Serve

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CCMC THE COMMISSION FOR CASE MANAGER CERTIFICATION

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Informed Advocacy:
Empowering Knowledge For Case Managers and Those They Serve

By Chikita B. Mann, MSN, RN, CCM, *Commissioner, Commission for Case Manager Certification*

Advocacy is the heart of case management practice. The Code of Professional Conduct for Case Managers from the Commission for Case Manager Certification (CCMC's Code) states that "case management is a means for improving client health, wellness and autonomy through advocacy, communication, education, identification of service resources, and service facilitation." Board-certified case managers are obliged to adhere to the rules and standards of the Code as they provide access to the right care and treatment at the right time, in support of goals set by the individuals they serve.

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Advocacy is most effective, of course, when case managers have full knowledge of the regulations, laws, and guidelines that impact their practice. This is what I've come think of as "informed advocacy." With informed advocacy, knowledgeable case managers can empower themselves with evidence-based best practices as they also empower their clients (known in some practice settings as "patients") and their support systems/families.

My specialization of workers' compensation case management is impacted by regulations that differ from state to state; therefore, as an informed advocate, I must stay up-to-date with regulatory changes that affect workers' compensation cases. Similarly, disability case managers and certified disability management specialists (CDMSs) must know workplace laws and regulations (both federal and state) such as the Family Medical and Leave Act (FMLA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). (CDMSs are also governed by their own Code.) Case managers in acute care, primary care, and other settings need to be well versed in Medicaid and Medicare rules, such as those impacting reimbursement.

For all case managers across the health and human services spectrum, there are rules and standards for professional and ethical practice: CCMC's Code and the Standards of Practice for Case Management from the Case Management Society of America (CMSA's Standards). In addition, each of our professional disciplines, such as nursing, social work, and vocational rehabilitation, have codes of ethics and practice standards. Combined, these standards and rules allow us to practice at the top of our certification and licensure to advocate for and protect consumers of case management services.

Informed Advocacy in Action

Here are five ways informed advocacy can help elevate case management practice:

1. **Advocate for what the law (or coverage) allows:** Workers' compensation provides an excellent illustration of informed advocacy in action. State regulations stipulate eligibility for certain types of services and interventions and under what circumstances or conditions. For example, if a person is unable to return to his or her job because of a permanent disability resulting from a work-related injury or illness, state law may allow that individual to receive vocational training. With this information, case managers can help open more possibilities for a

continues on page 6

Chikita Mann, MSN, RN, CCM, is a commissioner of the Commission for Case Manager Certification (CCMC), the first and largest nationally accredited organization that certifies case managers, and chair of the CCMC Ethics Committee & Professional Conduct Committee. She is also a disability RN case manager for GENEX Services Inc., for the State of Georgia, and she is responsible for workers' compensation, short- and long term disability, and legal nurse consulting. She is a member of the Honor Society of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau International. Her areas of expertise are cultural competency, workers' compensation case management, medication reconciliation, and virtual case management. She has a blog called "Case Management 411" that explores issues that directly and indirectly affect care coordination.

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