



[Workers' Comp](#)

Heart of Case Management 2026: Customer Division Winners

October 12, 2026
5 MIN READ

WINNERS: [Gerd Thomas](#) | [Mary Perez](#) | [Sarah Black](#) | [Belinda Land-Davis](#)

Gerd Thomas, RN, BS, CCM, DOLCM-CTR

Field Case Manager of the Year?

Image

Gerd Thomas

When an injured employee's recovery wasn't progressing as expected, Gerd took notice. Despite an established treatment plan, Gerd's clinical experience told him the employee needed another evaluation. Rather than simply accepting the existing course of care, he advocated for the employee and challenged the treating physician's plan, helping arrange an evaluation with another provider. That persistence proved critical: the new physician discovered a serious knee infection that had previously gone undetected. By recognizing that something wasn't right and speaking up, Gerd helped the injured employee receive the treatment he needed while potentially preventing a far more serious medical event.

But Gerd's impact went beyond identifying a medical issue. His advocacy also helped rebuild the injured employee's trust and confidence in the workers' compensation process during an already difficult experience. Through clear communication and strong relationships with the injured employee, physicians, adjusters and employer, Gerd became a trusted partner. His story is a powerful reminder that exceptional case management sometimes means having the confidence to question the path forward, and the commitment to keep advocating until the right care is found.

[watch GERD](#)

Mary Perez, RN

Field Case Manager of the Year?

Image

Mary Perez

When Mary first met the injured employee, he had only recently left the ICU after being seriously injured in an unprovoked workplace assault. He had sustained a traumatic brain injury, multiple fractures and internal injuries, and his family was facing an overwhelming number of questions about his care and what would come next. Mary immediately stepped in as a bridge between the injured employee, his family, medical providers, employer and workers' compensation team. As his recovery progressed across multiple specialists, she carefully

coordinated treatment, helped prevent gaps or duplicate services and made sure the family understood the care plan and next steps. Just as importantly, she listened, building the trust needed to help them navigate a long and difficult recovery.

As the full impact of his injuries became clear, the focus shifted from return to work to helping him regain as much independence and quality of life as possible. Mary continued advocating for his needs while helping him and his family understand what a safe recovery could realistically look like. Through close collaboration with the employer, providers and family, she helped keep care moving and supported the injured employee as he slowly regained function.

For Mary, that progress was the reward, and a reminder that case management is about more than returning someone to work. It's about seeing the whole person and helping them achieve the best possible outcome.

[watch MARY](#)

Sarah Black, RN, BSN, CCM

Telephonic Case Manager of the Year

Image
Sarah Black

For the past seven years, Sarah has built something invaluable with the injured employees and team at Continental Tire: trust. As a telephonic case manager, Sarah provides consistent follow-up throughout an employee's recovery, helping navigate medical appointments, changes in providers, physical therapy and evolving treatment needs. Her communication keeps injured employees supported and the work site informed, but it's the relationships she builds along the way that have made her such an important part of the program. Her approachable nature and commitment to being there when someone needs help have made her a resource injured employees know they can rely on.

That trust is reflected in the feedback Sarah receives from the people she serves. Continental Tire describes her as someone who consistently exceeds expectations and says injured employees regularly "sing her praises," a testament to the experience she creates during what can be an uncertain and challenging time. Over seven years, Sarah has demonstrated that exceptional case management isn't always defined by one extraordinary moment. Sometimes it's the cumulative impact of showing up, following through and building relationships that help people feel supported every step of the way.

[Watch SARAH](#)

Belinda Land-Davis, RN, CCM, WCCM

Telephonic Case Manager of the Year

Image

Belinda Land-Davis

For Belinda, effective case management begins with understanding what each injured employee needs to move forward. Supporting First Student, Belinda quickly assesses each claim, identifies potential barriers and works with the people involved to develop an individualized treatment and return-to-work strategy. Her proactive approach helps keep care moving, reduce unnecessary delays and ensure treatment remains focused on functional improvement and long-term well-being. Through consistent communication with injured employees, providers, adjusters and other stakeholders, Belinda keeps everyone aligned around a shared goal: helping the injured employee achieve the best possible recovery.

But coordination is only part of what makes Belinda's approach so effective. She takes the time to establish trust with injured employees, helping them stay engaged in their care and understand the path ahead. That combination of clinical expertise, creative problem-solving and genuine connection has made her a valued partner to First Student while supporting earlier, safer returns to work and positive claim outcomes. Belinda's story demonstrates that better outcomes begin by seeing every claim as individual, and bringing the right people, care and support together around the person at its center.

[Watch BELINDA](#)

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