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Building a Case for Case Management

There is plenty of evidence to support the need for a Case Management team in Workers' Compensation situations. But how do you help someone understand the inherent value of a case manager or team that truly advocates for all parties involved? [Integrated Care Management](#) made an interesting analogy between a Case Manager and a General Contractor, which helps define the role. Imagine that you are about to remodel your kitchen and you have hired a general contractor to coordinate the process. In a best-case scenario, the contractor stays on schedule, communicates with all the sub-contractors as needed and ultimately delivers a beautiful new kitchen. Every time you walk into your new kitchen, the beauty of the work is enhanced by the pleasant memories of the process.

Now imagine that the contractor was constantly behind schedule, failed to communicate with you when issues arose and even went over budget. In the end, you ended up with an equally beautiful kitchen, but you cannot help thinking about the headaches it took to get there. The end result is somewhat tarnished by the experience; as is your opinion of the contractor and perhaps anyone else involved in the project. The same could be said for the process of managing a Worker's Compensation case.

The [Case Management Society of America](#) reminds us that "the underlying premise of case management is based in the fact that, when an individual reaches the optimum, or best possible, level of wellness and functional capability, everyone benefits." That optimum level is more likely to be attained when facilitated by a case manager who takes a holistic approach to managing each unique case. It is an approach that requires not only an environment that allows and encourages direct communication between all parties involved, but also the cooperation of those parties. When the case manager assumes the role of liaison between the employee, employer, medical provider, insurance, etc. it expedites the ultimate goal, which is a smooth return to work.

The [State of Michigan](#) offered some Case Management Do's and Don'ts to assist in that process. Here are a few key items:

Do	Don't
Be inclusive of all parties involved in the medical recovery process, especially the injured employee and their family.	Give legal advice at any time.
Include goals and timeframes when creating the care plan, and allow for updates as needed.	Perpetuate disability by failing to address doctor recommendations, health concerns, or return-to-work issues in a timely fashion.
Determine what is needed for successful return to work, especially from employer's perspective.	Withhold information crucial to RTW success.
Provide client advocacy and support at all times, and provide input and guidance on treatment services...BE A LIAISON BETWEEN PARTIES.	Become personally and/or emotionally attached to the client.
Understand that there are many players in the case management process, but that your main client should always be the injured employee.	Interfere with due process between employee and employer.

It can be a complicated process, but understanding of the desired outcome should be clear. [The ICM Blog](#) explained it like this, "The final product is only as good as the process that gets you there. If the client has a great experience from start to finish, a positive outcome feels exponentially better."

Sources:

[Integrated Care Management Blog: Redefining Case Management](#)

[Case Management Society of America](#)

[State of Michigan LARA, Worker's Compensation Agency](#)