“CIGNA 101” Turns Interns into High-Quality Employees

August 27 — Colleges and Universities don’t offer “CIGNA 101.” But that doesn’t mean students can’t learn about the Company. CIGNA has multiple full-time career development programs, co-op programs, and internships to bring in the talented people we need across all areas of CIGNA to shape the future of health care.

One such program is engaged in working directly with the next generation of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRCs). For five years now, CIGNA’s Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling department has been collaborating with colleges and universities including the University of Pittsburgh, West Virginia University, and the University of North Texas to provide in-class seminars and arrange internships.

“Our partnerships with some of the universities that have Vocational Rehabilitation programs have been very successful, says Beth Chiappetta, Director of Return-To-Work programs. “They’ve facilitated the education of future vocational rehabilitation professionals concerning potential career opportunities at CIGNA.”

At least once a year, members of the vocational rehabilitation counseling team visit schools and present to a class of potential vocational rehabilitation counselors – usually students in the latter stages of their Master’s level training. They talk to the students about private sector disability management and define the VRC’s role at CIGNA. In fact, CIGNA has trained several interns and hired some as full-time VRCs.

In Their Own Words...
“I would describe my internship experience as positive and greatly beneficial to my understanding the role of a VRC at CIGNA,” says Elisabeth Bradley, who completed an internship with CIGNA and has since been hired as a Disability Vocational Case Manager in Pittsburgh. “I was able to benefit from observing various team members and participating fully in my mentor’s caseload. By doing these things, I was able to identify my skill level and develop this over the period of the internship.”

The real benefit to learning through on-the-job experience? “Coming into the role of a new VRC I was established with both the Claim team and the VRC team which enabled me to have the confidence in my abilities as a new counselor and a solid foundation on which to improve,” Elisabeth says.

Julie McCutcheon was also a VRC intern; she has since been hired on as a Disability Vocational Case Manager in our Dallas office. Says Julie: “Working as an intern gave me the practical, hands-on experience to apply the skills I learned in my classes. I use everything I learned in my vocational rehab program on a day-to-day basis.

“I have excellent resources to offer a very successful approach to return to work for individuals with disabilities,” Julie continues. “At CIGNA we work as a collaborative, cohesive team. Our team members are very intelligent counselors and all have different experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives to offer.”

“I feel that CIGNA’s overall training was excellent and all-encompassing when it comes to expounding upon my knowledge of general Vocational Rehabilitation,” adds Anna Ramage, another intern-turned-Disability Vocational Case Manager from Dallas. “However, it was the one-on-one attention and my mentor’s willingness to adapt to my learning style that made all the difference. Without CIGNA’s excellent training program, I would be lost!”

In the End, Everyone Benefits
“Working for a company that focuses on an individual’s health, well-being, and sense of security, the interns can help individuals with disabilities return to work and productivity,” Beth says. “This program has also created a pipeline of qualified candidates for CIGNA. Because of our rapid growth, we have been able to hire some of the interns after graduation making this a win-win for all involved.”

The students enjoy hands-on training in a real-life vocational rehab setting; CIGNA has the opportunity to employ quality talent; and customers are treated with the best possible care. An early relationship like this can turn into a long-lasting...
career and a win-win situation for everyone involved.

"I feel that my internship experience prepared me for my recently obtained Certification in Rehabilitation Counseling (CRC), concludes Julie. "I've been exposed to a variety of disabilities and creative strategies to overcome many return-to-work barriers."

Questions about CIGNA's internship and co-op programs or any college recruiting can be directed to the University Relations team.

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