

COMPANY:
Portland Habilitation Center
Northwest

HEADQUARTERS:
Portland, OR

EMPLOYEES:
More than 700



Company Uses CIMS to Fight Stigmas and Prove Quality

Portland Habilitation Center Northwest isn't your typical janitorial services company. Rather, PHC's primary mission is to train and employ individuals with disabilities throughout the Northwest. This includes persons who have physical or mental disabilities, and have had trouble in workplace situations as a result of their disability. PHC identifies what accommodations have to be made for their employees to succeed on the job — the opportunity to sit rather than stand to perform certain job functions, for example — and arranges for such accommodations while training people in janitorial and custodial work, administrative support and other jobs.

PHC also functions as the primary employer for the people it trains, contracting their services out to various clients in the area.

Since its inception in 1951, PHC has taken pride in helping people go beyond their limitations, recognizing that individuals with disabilities simply want a chance to prove they can be valuable assets in the workplace.

"Not everybody shares that view, however,— at least not right away. We have to change a lot of minds and preconceived ideas about our workforce," says Donna Murphy, operations manager for PHC's building services department.

That's why she knew CIMS certification would be invaluable to PHC.

"We fight stigmas and preconceived ideas all the time," she explains. "Yes, we change their minds quickly with the quality of our work. Also, our references — current clients who are satisfied with our work — are an important tool in us winning new clients, but I knew that this certification would be proof of our excellence that we could show to customers and potential customers. I knew it would mean a lot to us."

"Because we have such a good rapport and partner with our customers, we already had a good portion of the materials and documentation needed for CIMS certification," notes Murphy.

"For the rest, we held weekly meetings and assigned tasks to people," she says. "The HR piece of it to the HR director, Safety to the safety director."

Vance Manchester headed up the CIMS process at PHC.

"My job was to follow up with each member of our staff to make sure that they were able to understand and complete their assignments," he explains. "We used the CIMS guidebook to answer any questions on how to fulfill the requirements. We met as a whole group once a month. Some small groups met weekly."

“ When we bid on jobs, proposals are sent out, and then we spend a lot of time answering questions from clients about our systems and our management and our training. Now, because of CIMS, we have all of the answers in one place. I can go to the books we put together for CIMS and show clients proof of things like safety, training, customer service, and our management policies and procedures.”

~Donna Murphy,
Operations Manager,
Portland Habilitation Center
Northwest

**BEST TIP
FOR COMPANIES
THINKING ABOUT
CERTIFICATION:**

Create an Excel spreadsheet based on the CIMS assessment checklist, including information about who on staff is responsible for what area. That way, you can track the progress of individuals compiling their materials and make sure that everything is completed before the certification assessment.

ANOTHER TIP:

Always keep the assessment in the forefront of your mind. Think of the assessor as your customer, and put together the materials in a way that will make things easiest for him or her.

Manchester notes that one of the most important steps of the CIMS preparation process was sufficiently organizing the many pieces necessary to complete the CIMS puzzle. He knew he needed a simple way to keep track of everyone's progress in gathering and, in some cases, creating materials, so he asked PHC's director of information systems to create an Excel spreadsheet based on the CIMS assessment checklist.

"I took the spreadsheet and modified it so that there was a row for each staff member," Manchester explains. "That way, I was able to keep track of each staff member's progress towards completion."

As Manchester was keeping the PHC team on track and focused on achieving certification, Murphy was examining what they found along the way. She went into the CIMS process believing PHC would discover one of two things about its management: existing excellence or room for improvement. As it turned out, she found a little of both.

"I learned a lot as a result of the CIMS process," she says. "It opened my eyes."

One eye-opener came in the area of equipment maintenance.

"Before CIMS, we didn't have maintenance logs," she explains. "We just didn't do that. Now, for each piece of equipment, we have put together a log telling the purchase date, the cost, when maintenance was done and how much use it gets. I love it. We have this database for all of our equipment now. We're tracking costs that we've never tracked before via those logs and seeing where we can save money."

But Murphy sees the biggest CIMS-inspired change in the process of bidding for new jobs.

"When we bid on jobs, proposals are sent out, and then we spend a lot of time answering questions from clients about our systems and our management and our training," she explains. "Now, because of CIMS, we have all of the answers in one place. I can go to the books we put together for CIMS and show clients proof of things like safety, training, customer service and our management policies and procedures. It's all right there."

Once PHC became CIMS certified, Murphy emailed a press release to all PHC clients trumpeting the achievement.

"It was huge for us," she says. "It puts us a step ahead of our competition. I'm really excited about it. The way I see it, it's security for us. It's proof that we do what we say we do."

For the industry as a whole, Murphy believes this is just the beginning for CIMS.

"In the not-too-distant future, CIMS certification will be required for everyone in this industry to get customers and win bids," she says. "I really believe that." [CIMS](#)

About CIMS:

CIMS is the first comprehensive management and operations standard for cleaning organizations. Administered by ISSA and the American Institute for Cleaning Sciences, CIMS is a standard of excellence designed to help building service contractors and in-house service providers develop quality, customer-centered organizations.

The CIMS framework is built around five quality principles that have proven to be the hallmarks of well-managed, successful cleaning operations:

- Quality Systems
- Service Delivery
- Human Resources
- Health, Safety & Environmental Stewardship
- Management Commitment

Why should a company certify to CIMS? Daniel Wagner, director of CIMS for ISSA, explains: "Implementation of the Standard's elements affords an organization a tremendous opportunity to validate its management systems and processes. Professional, customer-centered cleaning organizations finally have a touchstone resource, a common rallying point around which all members of the industry can gather and work toward achieving an unprecedented level of professionalism and excellence."

ISSA[®]

The Worldwide Cleaning Industry Association

For more information contact
800-225-4772 or visit
www.issa.com/standard.