

# Public Health Social Work & the Workplace

**Tamara Konig** (SSW '06, SPH '07) describes her work as “a real blend of social work and public health.” As a Care Manager at John Hancock Insurance Company’s Retail Long Term Care Insurance Claims Department, Tamara helps policyholders and their families initiate claims, and use their Long Term Care policies to the best interest of the policyholder.



Tamara Konig

“I talk to people who are often in crisis situations,” she says, “who call trying to figure out how to take care of aging parents, siblings, spouses, or themselves.” Often, individuals initiating claims, and those with active claims, are living with chronic physical illnesses – in fact, a growing number have forms of dementia or other cognitive impairments. Crisis intervention, counseling, and problem-solving are just a few of the skills Tamara’s job requires while helping people access and understand a complex long term care system that includes the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. “I also need to be well versed in John Hancock’s Long Term Care Insurance products and company policies and procedures. I need to be knowledgeable about the health care system, trends in the older adult population, and the range of services available to older adults and their families.”

In addition to her public health training for health care management, Tamara relies on her social work training, particularly when looking at the individual. She cites the importance of understanding how variables such as race, age, and gender contribute to a person’s overall health picture and outcome. In addition, she applies her training in family dynamics to try to understand family relations within a claimant’s family.

“These variables affect how individuals access health care,

report medical conditions, respond to medical treatment and health care providers, and view a disease or illness in their communities,” Tamara states, “My colleagues and I focus on customer service and consider multiple aspects of someone’s situation—financial, medical and social—when making decisions about their service plans.”

Tamara adds how rewarding it is to witness a policyholder, who has no formal care in place, beginning his or her claims process, and looks to Tamara and her team for direction. She says, “By the time a policyholder has opened a claim and benefited from my team’s explanations of benefits and ongoing case management, he or she has appropriate services in place, whether it’s physical therapy, a live-in home health aide, or a skilled memory unit at a nursing home.”

Ultimately, she continues, we “practice due diligence every day to ensure that our policyholders are well informed, understand their policies, and have the resources necessary to care for themselves and their loved ones.”

The Campaign for Public Health Social Work  
[www.publichealthsocialwork.org](http://www.publichealthsocialwork.org)

