



Job Ready Services

Job Ready Services, LLC



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AMA Guidelines for Functional Capacity Evaluations (FCE's)

In the 2009 *AMA Guide to the Evaluation of Functional Ability: How to Request, Interpret and Apply Functional Capacity Evaluations*, the authors define FCE as "the objective measurement of a person's ability to perform functional work activities." Medical reasons for an FCE include:

- Injury prevention
- Work-related injury or illness management
- Chronic injury or illness evaluation

Let's focus on the use of the FCE in a work-related injury or illness management program. The book discusses the benefits of **routine assessments** in the rehab process. By doing **mini-FCEs** at periodic intervals, the progress of the injured worker toward meeting short and long term goals can provide valuable information and direction for healthcare providers. (Having an accurate job analysis with physical demands is also key to this process and will allow a more aggressive approach to returning the injured worker to work safely.) Often, an FCE is not ordered until near MMI, which may result in a lot of wasted time and money, as well as an "invalid" result. Also, as the book noted, having an evaluator who is capable of providing a clinical as well as work-related functional ability evaluation is critical to success. As the AMA authors note, "Because medical opinions of function are subjective, FCE's based on objective testing are used to add to the medical information obtained."



As soon as there seems to be a delay in progress, a mini-FCE may be requested to determine the reason as well as direction of future treatment.

Mini-FCE's can also be used to determine the possible reasons for delayed recovery and prompt the healthcare providers to "frankly discuss any submaximal or inconsistent effort with the patients, as well as establishing expectations that must be met for treatment to continue." Again, waiting until the end of medical treatment may be too late. These evaluations also can identify the worker's safe abilities and can be matched with their job tasks to assist in returning the worker to modified or transitional work earlier. As soon as there seems to be a delay in progress, a mini-FCE may be requested to determine the reason as well as direction of future treatment.

Fitness for Duty testing is another form of FCE, which is usually used for non-work-related injury or illness. Employees may wish to return to work and have asked their physicians to release them, but without objective evidence of their physical capacity, they may RTW too early and risk re-injury.

FCE's are also used to assist vocational case managers in placement efforts for the injured or disabled worker. For many years, attorneys, adjusters, case managers and employers have all relied on the subjective opinion of a physician to determine whether an injured worker can do a particular job. The physician is providing a guesstimate or best clinical judgment of that person's ability to do the job. The AMA notes a growing awareness that "physicians are not formally trained to define a person's occupational capabilities and therefore are **unable to accurately declare a person as totally disabled for working** (emphasis mine), or, conversely, capable of gainful employment." So, why do we continue to ask physicians to sign off on job descriptions?

William Sommerness, an attorney, states, "The most important testimony is that from the Physical Therapist or Occupational Therapist because they are the ones who...can do the best job of explaining the client's attitude and performance."

News and Upcoming Events

Congratulations Debra!

Debra Lord, President of Job Ready is the proud recipient of the 2009 Hall of Fame ACE award. The award recognizes her clinic as the "model for a successful industrial rehabilitation clinic" and was nominated by WorkSTEPS management. She received the award in Austin, TX at the WorkSTEPS symposium.

Congratulations Julie!

Julie Dubas, our Occupational Therapist, just brought home a brand new baby boy, named Ryan Marshall. Ryan has a 3 year old big brother, so, Julie and her husband have their hands full!

LUNCH & LEARN (NEW DATE!!)

Thursday, July 23, 2009

12:00pm-1:00pm

"Radiofrequency Ablation"

Dr. Christopher Godbout

Approved: CCM & CRC (1 hr)

Reminder: Early referrals for Work Conditioning could return the Injured Worker to work earlier and safer than waiting to do an FCE that may very well be invalid. Work conditioning is a daily program specifically designed to return the worker to work safely. If instituted early in the medical rehab of the IW, work conditioning results in a much increased likelihood of RTW, saving \$ in worker's comp & absence costs.

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For more information on any of these events or services, please contact Michelle Morgan:

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