

Adjudicative Advice

Requesting Functional Capacity Evaluations

Background

In 2002 a review of cases in which a Functional Capacity Evaluation Referral (FCE) had been requested, indicated that some inconsistency existed around when to arrange this assessment. Subsequent to the review, adjudicators and nurse case managers were contacted to determine 'best practices' in utilizing the Functional Capacity Evaluation.

Several independent studies of functional assessments were also obtained and noted. The overall consensus is that a FCE can be a useful tool by helping to focus the return to work efforts of the parties.

The following guidelines are designed to assist decision-makers. They are not absolute and are intended to encourage using this resource at the most appropriate point to maximize its effectiveness as a case management tool.

Principles

If a worker is actively participating in determining the suitability of a particular job, the FCE is more likely to be successful. A FCE is not as effective when the referral is less collaborative and more directive.

It is important to provide as much detail as possible about the potential job to the assessor. Job specific FCEs are more helpful than general assessments. The report should be accessible to all the return to work participants.

Guidelines

Two areas in which an FCE can be most helpful are:

- to facilitate or assist in the Early and Safe Return to Work (ESRTW) process
- to establish capabilities prior to a referral to a Labour Market Re-entry (LMR) service provider.

Consider an FCE if

1. Case management is hampered by complex issues such as:
 - prior unsuccessful ESRTW attempts
 - conflicting medical reporting on precautions and/or fitness for modified job
 - injuries that require detailed exploration of a worker's abilities.
2. Timing is appropriate:
 - close or at maximum medical recovery (MMR) /all key medical reports secured
 - additional/secondary conditions clarified.
3. Information to assist:
 - validation LMR opinion/direction
 - confirmation of a job offer's suitability.

Do not proceed with an FCE if

- The sole purpose is to determine a worker's effort or compliance
- The worker has returned to work and an ergonomic assessment has not been arranged.

Claims Quality Loop

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Notice: This document is intended to assist WSIB decision-makers in reaching consistent decisions in similar fact situations and to supplement applicable WSIB policies and guidelines as set out in the Operational Policy Manual (OPM). This document is **not a policy** and in the event of a conflict between this document and an OPM policy or guideline, the decision-maker will rely on the latter.



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