

New “Workability IME” Includes Functional Capacity Testing!

Resolving complex work disability issues usually requires multidisciplinary effort that is guided by independent, objective evaluations of impairment and functional capacities. Unfortunately, the traditional history and physical examination cannot reliably predict a worker’s capacity to function in the presence of a medical impairment. If the attending physician or IME examiner overestimates a patient’s physical capacities, then premature return to work may result in delayed recovery or re-injury. On the other hand, considerations of patient safety and malpractice liability may prompt the attending physician or IME Examiner to set overly conservative return-to-work restrictions that greatly underestimate the worker’s physical capabilities.

As a “bridge” between health care and the workplace, the Functional Capacity Evaluation (FCE) assists with evaluation of the patient’s recovery within a vocational context. Functional Capacities Testing should be performed by a qualified physical or occupational therapist who is not biased by a treatment relationship with the injured worker or financial ties with the attending physician. This may be warranted during instances when the injured worker:

- has not made significant progress after 30 days of transitional work activities.
- has not progressed to full duty after 60 days of transitional work activities.
- demonstrates indications of submaximal effort or exaggerated symptoms that limits progress in therapy or progression of work activities.
- has work restrictions from the attending physician that appear inappropriate based on established claims allowances and DODM guidelines.
- is referred for vocational rehabilitation services or pain management without an objective baseline of functional capacities.
- has reached Maximum Medical Improvement (MMI) and requires permanent restrictions for safe job placement.
- requests non-working wage loss benefits.
- applies for Permanent Total Disability (PTD) benefits.

The “Workability IME” is a new type of IME service that bundles a standard IME by a BWC-certified physician with comprehensive functional capacities testing by a qualified physical or occupational therapist. This service is available at any of Workability Network’s convenient [Regional IME Centers](#). Consideration of FCE results and medical findings helps substantiate the injured worker’s medical impairment and extent of disability. This integrated exam approach helps determine the need for continued treatment, reasonable accommodations or job placement assistance to allow the injured employee to meet personal, social or occupational demands.

This multidisciplinary exam can address multiple issues such as MMI, impairment, and extent of disability for a cost comparable to a comprehensive FCE. This is achieved by avoiding duplication of professional time between examiners for history, records review and physical exam components. [Click here](#) to view a sample of Functional Capacities Test Results and Summary Report of Workability that is included with the IME report. For statewide scheduling or more information, call Workability Network toll-free 866-772-1026.