

JRS Services:

- Functional Capacity Evaluations
- Work Conditioning
- Job Analyses
- Fit for Duty Testing
- Employment Testing



Is a Repeat Functional Capacity Evaluation (FCE) Really Necessary?

An invalid FCE is always a little exasperating for those who handle worker's comp cases. There are many reactions to an invalid FCE:

- "NOW what?"
- "Great – this client can't do ANYthing and now they will be permanently and totally disabled."
- The physician releases the patient to return to work, "per the FCE" – so, what are the true restrictions if the effort was invalid?
- The adjuster often feels as if money was wasted on the FCE.
- The Case Manager is at an impasse – how can they assist an injured worker to return to work if they don't know what the true physical capabilities are? "Sedentary work" is not realistic nor accurate for everyone.

One option that is often mentioned in the recommendations of an FCE report is to "repeat the FCE" and ask the client to give their **best effort** (even though they are told to do this the first time). There are a myriad of reasons that a client or patient may not have produced their best effort in an FCE:

- **Fear** – their healthcare provider has possibly told them not to lift over a certain amount and they may be fearful of re-injury.
- **Perception of Disability** – perhaps the client feels as though they need to "show" someone how disabled they perceive they are, and may exaggerate their pain and reduce their effort during the test.
- **Secondary Gain** – the client either perceives or has been told by others, that the more disabled they are, the more money or larger settlement they will receive.
- **No Desire to Return to Work** – the client may not have a desire to return to work which may be due to the fact that they were physically unable to do their job in the first place. Or, perhaps they simply don't like the job or have had a poor performance review and perceive their employment to be in jeopardy. Testing at the post-offer stage of employment will **prevent the hiring of those persons who are not capable of doing the job** and therefore at risk of injury.

Sometimes, "miraculous cures" take place upon the repeat of an FCE! In one case, because the FCE showed such conclusive evidence of inconsistent effort, the physician told the patient he could not rate and release him until he had some definitive numbers on his physical capabilities. He recommended a repeat FCE and encouraged the patient to give his best effort. Upon returning just 2 weeks later to re-test, the patient's effort was significantly improved and his lifting ability went from **30-40 lbs up to 90 lbs** on the re-test! This not only increases the probability of the client returning to work, but even if they are unable to return to their regular job, their chances have increased dramatically of finding alternative employment.

"[The FCE] is really just a snapshot of that person's ability. If the effort is invalid, then you have no information or evidence of that person's capabilities."



Is a Repeat FCE Really Necessary? (Continued)

Repeating the FCE is not the only option for improving the client's effort and determining their true abilities. **Work conditioning** is often a recommendation in an FCE. The purpose of the FCE is to determine the client's physical capabilities, but it is really just a snapshot of that person's ability. If the effort is invalid, then you have no information or evidence of that person's capabilities. For example, if that patient was fearful of re-injury and did not put forth maximum effort, then permanent restrictions should never be assigned based on this poor effort. A work conditioning program will allow that client to increase their confidence, strength and endurance, as well as decrease their anxiety on a **daily basis**. In addition, the documentation of the client's abilities and progression (or regression) is provided. If evaluated on a regular basis, the patient's physical capabilities will be well documented at the end of the program. As a matter of fact, if patients are involved in work conditioning as early as appropriate, oftentimes an FCE is not even necessary!

As always, it is important to let the client or patient know that it is imperative that they put forth their best effort in a Functional Capacity Evaluation. New technology in FCE's is very sensitive to the sincerity and consistency of effort among patients undergoing testing. The good news is that if the patient truly has deficits, this testing will identify them. The bad news (for the patients who are "malingering") is that the FCE will also identify conclusively, that the patient's effort is not their best.

If you would like to learn more about new technology in FCE's, please plan to attend our next Lunch & Learn: "**The NEW Functional Capacity Evaluation: This Ain't Your Mama's FCE**" in July (information below).

Our Next Lunch and Learn:

The New Functional Capacities Evaluation (This Ain't Your Mama's FCE)

When: Thursday, July 21, 2011

Location: Job Ready office in Raleigh, NC
2300 Westinghouse Blvd, Suite 107

Time: 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm *Cost:* \$10.00

Speaker: Debra Lord, President of Job Ready Services

Credits Approved: CRC (1 hour)
CCM (1 hour)
Dept of Insurance (general insurance - 1 hour)

RSVP by: Tuesday July 19, 2011 To register, visit our website:
<http://www.jobreadyservices.net/index.php/contact/lunch-and-learn-registration/>

Hot Topics?

Are there any worker's comp or employment law-related topics for which you would like more information (a future Lunch & Learn or Seminar)? Have you heard a good speaker lately that you would like to recommend? Medical topics addressing work-related injuries and treatments? Contact Michelle Morgan: michelle.morgan@jobreadyservices.net or 919-256-1400 x 223 – any suggestions or recommendations are welcome.

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