

**IME Roundtable Meeting
May 22, 2025
via Hybrid**

Staff Participants: Cristy Miller, L&I Dane Henager, ATG Joann Willyerd, L&I Karen Jost, L&I Melissa Dunbar, L&I LaNae Lien, L&I Shannon Rushing, L&I Troy Parks, L&I Jennifer Jutte, L&I Cicely Hartwick, L&I Teri Baughman, L&I Azadeh Farokhi, L&I Knowrasa Patrick, L&I Neil Diemer, ATG Azadeh Farokhi, L&I	Participants: Cassandra Chelf Chelsea Stockner Craig Jamie Lelone Jeff Smith Kayla McCain Mat Nguyen Rachel Faber Tracy Fochtman	Douglas Pepper, DC Steven Elerding, MD Tar Chee Aw, DDS Todd Seidner, MD
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Safety Message, Agenda & Accountability Log Review:

Troy briefly discussed online meeting etiquette. The agenda was reviewed.

May is motorcycle safety month. The weather is getting nicer and more people are out riding motorcycles. Make sure to check your blind spots as they can be harder to see. Remember to leave plenty of space when behind a motorcycle.

Accountability Log Review– Troy Parks

Troy reviewed the accountability log. Reviewed issue log

The firms shared concerns about billing for in person fraud reviews and addendums. The investigators wanted to bring documents directly to examiners and be there when the examiner reviewed them. Firms can send examples to Nancy to review. There has been staff turnover so there may need to be some refresher training.

Program Updates:

Examiner Pool – Troy Parks

Troy shared the examiner pool data. He did not have the billing data to show the number of examiners that are doing the work. The number of out-of-state examiners was shared, along with the number of newly approved and exiting examiners.

Complaints YTD – Troy Parks

Troy shared the 2025 year to date IME complaint data. The top specialties and types of complaints remain the same. Out of the 99 complaints received, nine were on recorded exams. There were approximately 12,600 exams done in 2024. The number of complaints received is on less than 1% of all IMEs.

The number of examiners there are complaints on is not available at the moment but can be looked into.

Attendees asked if it's possible to show the break out of how many examiners are involved in the complaints broken out by specialty.

Examiner Exit and Retention Surveys – Troy Parks

Troy shared the retention survey information for 2025. There have been two surveys received so far. There have been no exit surveys received for 2025. The data for the 2024 responses was shared.

MEH Updates – Melissa Dunbar

Melissa shared a high-level look at the upcoming updates to the Medical Examiners' Handbook. There will be some updates to the Interpreter Services section. The WACs, RCWs, and treatment guidelines are always checked to make sure they are current. Most of the updates this year are to the Mental Health sections of the handbook.

Suggested updates can be sent at any time to Melissa Dunbar, melissa.dunbar@lni.wa.gov.

Quality Review – Teri Baughman

Cicely Hartwick was introduced as the new IME ONC since Tanya Weber's retirement. She is open to going to exam sites to see how exams are conducted. It might be possible to do this when Dr. Farokhi could come as well.

IME Recording:

Third-Party Recording Pilot – Troy Parks

Dr. Jennifer Jutte shared some relevant legislation that passed. HB1197 went through in the 2023 session which allows psychologists to be attending providers. This will be effective as of July 1 2025. The RCWs that required updates due to this legislation were shared. The CR103 adopting the final language was filed on May 20 and will be effective July 1.

Psychologist must join the Medical Provider Network (MPN) on or before June 30, 2025. They will be able to serve as attending providers on mental health only claims. Per the current rules, Psychiatrists are still the only providers who can perform psychiatric IMEs.

There have been some changes to fee schedule in chapter 17. The outlined changes were due to the rule updates and provided clarification.

Discussed the PTSD survey and jurisdictional review, data collection and report production. Information on PTSD Clinical guideline development was also shared along with the subcommittee experts.

The difference between evidence informed and evidence based is based on research literature and a variety of other PTSD guidelines that are already out there. The difference between the two is based on the rigor of the studies that have been conducted to come to those conclusions as well as the amount of studies that have been done.

Right now, the department has the policy and implementation piece of the process. The monitoring side will be coming after that is done. Staff are also looking at an education side as well. The hope is to have doctors use one of the gold standards when evaluating. The guideline is still in production and has not gone to public comment yet so nothing is set in place right now.

IME Recording:

Third-Party Recording Pilot – Troy Parks

Troy shared the background on third-party recording pilot. L&I has contracted with a third-party vendor, Medical Memory. This will be a six-month pilot. The hope is that this will help reduce delays, help with less risk and administrative burden associated with maintaining multiple recordings, and inform any future rulemaking efforts.

When the worker notifies the firm that they intend to record, participating IME firms can opt out of this third-party recording. If the worker and examiner both agree to use this option then verbal consent should be obtained at the start of the exam recording. The worker should also be provided a copy of the information sheet from L&I that includes how they can obtain access to their recording.

The department will be looking at utilization during this pilot and if it is improving the completion rate of IMEs with recordings.

There is no way to know how many providers are allowing recording as this continually changes. It would be difficult to tell exactly if more examiners are allowing recordings overall or if they are only allowing it when using Medical Memory.

Participating firms have been pleased with Medical Memory. They have been very easy to use. They also would encourage L&I to do some outreach to worker attorneys. They are not as familiar with the pilot and that this is an option. There still may be some misinformation out there that the examiners have the recording since it's done on a firm's device.

The recent referral data with requests to record and cancelation rates was shared. The number of reschedules are still high and the amount of work that goes into those is a lot. Staff will assess the pilot in July to determine next steps.

The department is taking on the costs for pilot at this time. A cost analysis would need looked at if it is made permanent. It would be hard to look at time loss and if this pilot has an affected on that.

There are only a couple psych IME examiners that allow recording and they only schedule a certain number of IMEs.

A reminder was given about entering recording information in post-exam screen for the IME referral. Also make sure to note this at the beginning of the report.

Interpreter Services:

Feedback on Rollout & Language Link Update – Cristy Miller

Cristy gave an update on Interpreter services. Telephonic interpretation rolled out in January. If SOSi cannot secure an interpreter for on-demand telephonic services then they will transfer to CTS Language Link.

The number of provider accounts and number of active interpreters in the system has increased. Most interpreters are in-state. Out of state and country interpreters are allowed to register with SOSi as long as they meet the requirements. Please refer any issues to Cristy. SOSi is required to answer the phone in 60 seconds. L&I is monitoring issues and addressing these issues with SOSi as they come up.

Statewide success rate is about 92% while IME is about 84%. Cristy has worked with SOSi to have them identify IME requests and prioritize those. They are seeing a lot of unfulfilled requests are due to interpreter late cancels. The department is working with SOSi on this and holding interpreters accountable. SOSi is managing penalties for interpreters which include notification as well as removal from the system.

If firms know they will need to go through CTS they can send a request to SOSi. If they see there is no interpreter in the system, they will send email to the requester to let them know and offer to set them up with CTS. If the requester accepts, SOSi will send the information CTS needs to set up the appointment and the billing information needed. They will also include the requester's contact and CTS will set up the appointment.

If firms have compliments for interpreters, they can also send to SOSi as well.

Firms have been instructed not to contact CTS directly as of right now. Cristy will talk internally to see if there is an issue with provider contacting CTS directly if other issues come up with long wait times.

When scheduling, make sure to select IME as the appointment type. In the notes to interpreter section, make sure to include any information they may need, such as if the worker or provider is traveling.

Claims & Scheduling Units Trends:

Claims – Nancy Adams

Nancy gave a brief update from claims. Staff have seen some attorneys stating they will only have worker seen if there is an in-person interpreter. There is no rule regarding this. Firms can just document if worker refuses to go forward with the exam.

IME firms need to know that Claim Managers do not see secure messages as soon as they are sent. They see it when they get to it in their work lists and they have 35 days. If a firm is needing to contact a Claim Manager right away, they should call them or contact Nancy. They can also call the scheduling unit and they can help the firm get in touch with the Claim Manager.

Self-Insurance –LaNae Lien

There was nothing to report out on, and no questions.

Scheduling – Shannon Rushing

Shannon gave a quick update from the IME Scheduling Unit. Travelers now have to have the RealID or a passport to fly. Staff are running into barriers with this when scheduling travel for workers. For out of state workers, the only other way to travel is by train which costs more and takes longer.

In the first three weeks of May, they have seen an increase in referrals. In Claims they have had claim leads and supervisors looking at claims that have been sitting. Possibly getting a more experienced staff looking at them has caused this increase.

Q&A – Open Discussion Round Robin – Group

Firms asked about the process time for applications. Most examiners renew every three years and there has been an influx of applications. Staff can look at the process to see what changes can be made to help make the process quicker and more efficient.

Attendees thought a doctor focused meeting in Tukwila would be great. It would be nice to get the examiners in, and have Dr. Farokhi and Dr Jutte there. Doctors are usually more available on a Monday and Friday or even weekends. A meeting like this would not need to be quarterly but maybe a once a year. Some topic suggestions are a discussion with psych examiners about recording, PTSD updates, and possibly have the new ONC lead a discussion about quality review.

Firms would like to get back into fee discussions. They would like a discussion in a time frame that would allow updates to be done by the next fee schedule update. The suggestion was to have a workgroup with firm, examiners, department staff, and actuaries. The firms would like to see the work that has been done to make the recent updates.

Some attorneys are starting to go around the firms and contacting the examiner directly. Examiners are not all experienced and don't know to refer them back to the Claim Manager, so they will answer the questions they're being asked.

Issue Tracking:

Provider Concerns:	Department Updates / Outcomes:
Interpreter scheduling issues	<u>5/22/25</u> : utilization data presented; discussion on mitigation efforts to ensure weekend coverage for IME firms. <u>1/16/25</u> : update on IME utilization and roll out of on-demand over the phone 1/2/25. <u>9/19/24</u> : SOSi is the new interpreter services

Provider Concerns:	Department Updates / Outcomes:
	provider. <u>6/17/24</u>: Go Live!
Legislative Bill that allowed recording of IMEs	<u>5/22/25</u>: recording pilot update. Co-recording rule writing abandoned/code reviser filing repealed. <u>1/7/25</u>: GovDelivery message on delay in co-recording rule writing. Upcoming 3rd party recording pilot March-August 2025. <u>9/19/24</u>: CR101 filed in August for Co-recording and Third-party recording pilot rules. Listening sessions held. Draft language shared Oct 10. Co-recording rules anticipated to file in December. Third-party recording pilot estimate to last 6 months.
Large Addendum Requests	<u>5/22/25</u>: firms shared concerns with large addendum requests associated with state fund claims and fraud investigations. Current reimbursement rate of \$168.19 is a global fee (file review included). Department is exploring payment options to address the extra amount of time it takes for examiners to review new records. One option is quantifying # of pages included in the fee reimbursement and allowing billing of 1129M (Extensive File Review) for pages after set threshold. L&I met with CSP on fraud investigator requests and explored ways to improve processes. Additional engagement expected to scope questions being asked of examiners and to refine scope of future requests.

NEXT IME ROUNDTABLE MEETINGS

Thursday, September 18, 2025 – 9:30 am – noon – Location: TBD

Thursday, January 15, 2026 – 9:30 am – noon – Location: TBD

Thursday, May 07, 2026 – 9:30am – noon – Location: TBD