

IME Business and Labor Advisory Team Meeting
August 11, 2022
9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Present: Kristen Baldwin-Boe, Tanya Weber, Karen Jost, Teri Baughman, Nancy Adams, Stuart Bammert, Dane Henager, Melissa Dunbar, Richard Clyne, Chantelle Yeager, Kathy Potvin, Lloyd Brooks, Donna Egeland, Kelli Zimmerman

Guests: Cristy Zarate, Carolyn Logue, Joann Willyerd

Absent: Cheri Ward, Gary Kolonja, Knowrasa Patrick, Lisa Vivian, LaNae Lien, Ann Silvernale, Dianne Whitten

Brief Summary of Activities:

- Announcements, Safety Message, & Introductions
- Review Charter
- Review Past Committee Initiatives & Highlights
- IME Program Updates
- Quality Measures
- Updates
- Open Discussion

Announcements & Safety Message:

Kristen reviewed Zoom meeting etiquette. Public comments should be held until the end of the meeting.

Our safety topic today is a reminder about Heat Related Illness. Heat exhaustion is caused by exposure to heat and dehydration. The body can't cool down and regulate its internal temperature. If you don't take steps to reduce the body temperature and hydrate then heat exhaustion can turn into heatstroke. Heat stroke can be life-threatening. If someone is showing signs of a heat related illness, quickly act to cool their body temperature and have them drink water. Most people recover quickly once they hydrate, cool down, and rest. Don't hesitate to get medical help if symptoms are severe or when a person continues to feel unwell after 30 minutes of cooling and hydrating.

Karen announced a new manager for Provider Quality and Compliance (PQC) has been hired. His name is Troy Parks and he starts August 16. He is coming from DOH and has 10-15 years in state management. There is also a new Associate Medical Director (AMD) starting soon. Dr. Azadeh Farohki is familiar with Washington and is moving back here to join L&I. These two will be at the next meeting.

Review Charter:

The charter was sent out in July as well as this morning. The IME Business and Labor (B&L) Advisory Committee was formed in 2007. The legislature asked business and labor to work with L&I on improvements. The charter was developed in 2017. These meetings are the primary venue for B&L representatives to advise the department on quality improvements, best practices, and provide input on process improvement. The team provides insight and feedback on short and long-term projects and legislative mandates.

Past membership and quality improvement initiatives were reviewed. The exam cap was an early initiative that put a cap on the number of exams examiners could do in a day which also helped reduce the number of worker complaints. This committee advised the rule revisions in both 2010 and 2013. The Medical Examiners' Handbook (MEH) is updated every year and clarifications and new items have been added based on feedback from this group. New fees and fee codes have also been added that this group has weighed in on. (see slide deck for full presentation)

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Regarding next steps for this group, there are issues and initiatives that are being worked on that this group will be able to provide feedback on. The telemedicine rules and fees are topics this group will be involved with.

IME Program Updates:

MARFS Update – Karen

The fee schedule for all WA workers compensation was updated in July this year. The significant updates to the IME fee schedule is chapter 13. The update page for the fee updates can be found here: <https://lni.wa.gov/patient-care/billing-payments/fee-schedules-and-payment-policies/policy-2022#billing-and-payment-policies>. Any feedback can be sent to hppm@lni.wa.gov.

2022 MEH Updates – Kristen

The MEH was also updated in July this year. The updates were reviewed. Most of the updates this round were clarifications. There were also updates to the mental health chapter and the new WACs were added.

Quality Measures - Tanya

Quality Data

Tanya assumed responsibility for the IME complaint / feedback work Kelli had done. This will enhance the ability to improve the quality of IMEs and boost worker and examiner satisfaction. Future planning will include analyzing the data being collected as well as identifying and collecting data not currently captured that will help identify trends and improve outcomes.

Feedback/Complaints

Tanya is working on analyzing the data regarding complaints and feedback. She will be able to review more in about six months and give more of an update at that time.

Updates:

Claims – Nancy

The IME data report is required by a new WAC. The department is going to be putting out a joint State Fund (SF) and Self-Insured (SI) IME data report. The first report will hopefully be out by August 24. There will be GovDelivery messages with a link to where report will be listed. The report will be under the public data tab here: <https://lni.wa.gov/agency/#public-data>. It is anticipated that the report will be posted twice a year. There will be conversations about trends and if the correct data is being collected.

At the last meeting the group asked about any new Claim Manager (CM) training to help staff move a claim forward with the current limitations around IMEs, and what do they do when they cannot get an IME. The CM expectations and the best practices used to keep claims moving forward were updated. A newer version of the IME checklist was created which includes things that should be done before scheduling an IME. With the new protest pilot, the protests coming in on IMEs go to higher level CMs and they are helping to determine ways to get the necessary information from other sources or if an IME will still be needed. Most training is still reinforcing past trainings directing CMs to gather information from other sources before scheduling an IME.

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Scheduling – Stuart

Stuart shared data regarding scheduling trends. This data is different than the data report Nancy discussed. This is looking at how many IME referrals are created, completed, and not completed. In January 2020 there were a little over 2,000 IME referrals per month. This amount dropped with Covid and then again in January 2021 due to 6440 legislation. The number of referrals currently received per month is still lower than January 2020 but has risen slightly.

The new claim data compared to the IME referral data was shared. The number of new claims received since January 2021 has gone up only slightly. The amount of IME referrals has stayed steady, however it's expected that the referral data would lag behind the new claims data.

The typical reason a referral is not complete is ultimately based on the CM deciding not to move forward with or not to reschedule an IME. There are no-shows but those are generally rescheduled.

A timeline for how long it takes from the time the IME referral is created to when the report is received will be part of the data Nancy discussed.

Self-Insurance – LaNae

SI is helping with the joint IME data report. It is not quite ready yet but is anticipated to drop August 24. They have conducted internal and external training of the new IME rules, and are responding jointly to any questions that may come across for SI or SF on that.

There is a SI colloquium on November 15. There is a panel that will be talking about long Covid that will have a couple providers speaking. There will be a GovDelivery notice going out which will include more information and how to sign up.

Open Discussion:

There should be more information on the telemedicine rules at the next meeting, and there will be stakeholdering to help draft the language. The first IME data report will be available at the next meeting and can be discussed.

The report will not include IME protest information. That will be gathered separately for SI claims. Nancy can bring data regarding the SF protests such as how many received, and the reasons to the next meeting.

The group is glad to see that SI and SF are starting to be integrated more with some of their work. There are similar concerns between the two but historically have had different answers to those concerns. It is nice to see those coming together.

Next meeting dates were shared. If there are any questions regarding any of the handouts, or suggested topics for the next meeting, email Kristen.

Future Meetings:

Tuesday	December 06, 2022	9:30am – 11:30	Location TBD
Tuesday	April 04, 2023	9:30am – 11:30	Location TBD
Thursday	August 10, 2023	9:30am – 11:30	Location TBD