



APPENDIX 8

Values - Analysis of Responses by Statement

17. Evaluations are based on clear and consistent standards, definitions and guidelines.

Almost two thirds all respondents (60%) rated this “Essential” and one third (34%) rated it “Important” for a total of 94%. More Claim managers, Injured worker/Labor and “Other” rated this “Important” than did other groups, and fewer rated it “Essential” A few respondents (3.5%) said they “Disagree” with this statement.

Most comments mentioned fundamental characteristics of standards that would be important to them including realistic, fair, balanced, objective, considers individual case difficulties and issues, clear yet not overly prescriptive and well communicated. Some stated that the assessment method should be tested to ensure it is valid and reliable. Six of the comments, including 4 who marked “Disagree” stated that current practices do not have clear and consistent standards, definitions and guidelines and stated that this would be valuable to have, indicating they would support this as a criterion.

Total number of comments: 40.

Recommendation: This should be a key criterion. Additional work may be needed to clarify the standards, definitions and guidelines that will be used in evaluations and to clearly communicate these to affected parties.

18. Performance rankings are based on standards, not relative positions.

Similar number of respondents rated it either “Essential” (40%) or “Important” (37%) for a total of 77%. Almost 10% marked “Disagree.”

A quarter of the comments voiced concerns about the criteria to be used in an evaluation system and the extent to which it may appropriately consider key aspects of quality and effectiveness, including case complexity. These concerns should be addressed in Section I above when defining criteria for “quality and effectiveness.” About half of the comments indicated they did not understand the term “relative position.” Five of the comments disagreed with the assumption that performance rankings were necessary or advisable, whether or not they were based on standards or on relative positions. One comment suggested creating essential standards, below which the work is rejected, and above which, relative rankings might be possible.

Total number of comments: 74.

Recommendation: The assessment system should be based on clearly communicated standards. Relative rankings could be used if the rankings correlated with meaningful differences in “quality and effectiveness.” Whether the approach uses standards, relative rankings or some combination, it will be important to explain why the approach was selected and the values it is expected to support.

For example:

- A “pass/fail” standard could ensure that minimum criteria are met and maximize the number of VRCs eligible to receive referrals. However it would provide little information for a referral source who must choose among qualified providers.
- Relative rankings (e.g. grading on a curve) could make it easier for the referral source to choose when there are many VRCs available (e.g. Seattle) and it is a standard referral without unique needs or complexities. However, if the method is to be credible, the ranking must be a valid reflection of substantive differences in performance. A risk of using relative rankings is that they often increase competitive behaviors and reduce collaboration among those who are subject to the ranking and could result in poorer quality in the analysis and outcome on a referral.
- A standard could contain gradations with increasing levels of expertise. Since evaluation is conducted against the standard and not against colleagues (as in a relative ranking system) it tends to foster collaboration and learning among those who are subject to the evaluation. It could also provide the referral source with

additional information when dealing with complex cases. However, each gradation would require clear definitions and evaluation processes.

- Any method selected would need to be validated as a reliable indicator of quality and effectiveness.

19. Evaluation criteria which are used to assess individual performance are within the control, or significant influence, of the person being evaluated.

More than half of all respondents (56%) rated this “Essential” and one fifth (22%) rated it “Important” for a total of 78%. One in ten respondents (11%) marked that they “Disagree” with this statement.

Most comments strongly supported this statement. Respondents who marked “Essential” provided a clear message of strong support. Many who marked “Disagree” stated that they felt it should be important but has not been true, indicating they would support this as a criterion. Some felt it is simply not possible and it is unclear how this perspective may have influenced their rating. A few thought that the statement meant that the individual being evaluated could influence the criteria used to evaluate and disagreed with this premise. It is unclear how they may have responded if they understood the statement to mean that criteria would be limited to aspects within the control of the VRC.

Total number of comments: 67.

Recommendation: This should be a key factor in how criteria are defined and which criteria are used in the assessment. The quote, “Accountability without authority is punishment” summarizes numerous comments.

20. The system promotes individual accountability by separately evaluating the work of each person who contributed to completing the referral. This could include VRCs, interns, and supervisors of interns.

About one third of all respondents (29%) rated this “Essential” and about one third (36%) rated it “Important” for a total of 65%. One in eight respondents (12%) marked “Disagree.” L&I vocational staff had the highest proportion of “Disagree” at 26%. No medical providers or self-insured disagreed.

Some thought that individual accountability would promote teamwork and others felt it would reduce teamwork, but most comments felt teamwork was very important. Several comments referred to the importance of contributions by all participants in the referral process and included VRCs, interns, physicians, claim managers, etc. Some felt that the assigned VRC should be accountable for all work done on the referral by other VRCs and/or interns while others felt that each contributor, including physicians, should be accountable.

Total number of comments: 84.

Recommendation: To promote both teamwork and individual accountability, roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined for each person who contributes to completing the referral and performance evaluations limited to those responsibilities. One of the responsibilities of the assigned VRC is to ensure vocational work performed by other VRCs or interns is done well and a performance assessment could reflect this. The extent to which there can be clear roles and responsibilities for all participants and these can be accurately assessed will be the challenge. Whether this responsibility should reside with L&I, the vocational profession, individual firms, or some combination of players could be discussed and would have implications for who should monitor it. Given the number of comments regarding physicians, L&I should explore options for clarifying roles, responsibilities and improve the processes and accountability mechanisms regarding physician's contributions during vocational referrals.

21. Criteria are applied equally to everyone who is subject to the measure

Almost two thirds of all respondents (62%) rated this "Essential" and about one quarter (24%) rated it "Important" for a total of 86%. A few people (5%) marked "Disagree." L&I vocational staff had the highest proportion of "Disagree" at 26%. No medical providers or self-insured disagreed.

Many commented that this is essential in order to have a useful measuring tool. Many commented that other participants such as physicians, claim managers, L&I vocational consultants, etc. should also be subject to relevant measures and held accountable. Others mentioned that interns are on a learning curve and if their work is evaluated, this should be

considered. Some were concerned about how or if complexity factors would be considered. A few stated that criteria should be applied equally but the L&I system does not do so, indicating they would support this as a criterion. L&I staff who rated it “Disagree” did not provide comments explaining the rating.

Total number of comments: 40.

Recommendation: This should be a value for the assessment system and the definition of “applied equally” should be clear. To do this, roles, responsibilities and expectations would need to be defined and communicated.

22. The method accounts for complexity of cases to ensure appropriate comparisons. Complexity may include location, severity or injury, or the skills and abilities of the injured worker.

More than half of all respondents (56%) rated this “Essential” and about one third (31%) rated it “Important” for a total of 87%. A few people (5%) marked “Disagree.”

Most comments strongly supported a method that could consider case complexity and provided additional examples of aspects that could increase the complexity *such as* substance abuse, language, criminal records, psychological issues or language barriers.

Some said that complexity is difficult to define, measure, and statistically validate. One employer stated, “this is impossible to do without there being many disputes as to whether the case is ‘fairly rated.’ Avoid it.”

Total number of comments: 40.

Recommendation: Complexity of a case often impacts the results that are possible and appropriate. They are different for every claimant and can change over the course of a claim and even during the course of a referral. Since defining, fairly assessing, and validating a measure of complexity will be a very difficult task, it is recommended that the evaluation system focus instead on the proactive behaviors and professional analysis of a VRC *given various complexities*, and not on developing the right list of complexity factors in order to

generate a validated regression equation. If teams in Phase II recommend using a regression equation, it is suggested that an expert be included in the development of the formula and that adequate resources be dedicated to the research necessary to validate it.

23. The method of evaluation is simple and understandable; VRCs are able to predict results (reproducible).

More than half of all respondents (51%) rated this “Essential” and about one third (34%) rated it “Important” for a total of 85%. A few people (6%) marked “Disagree.” Injured worker/Labor (5 respondents) unanimously marked it “Important.” Claim managers, L&I staff and Employers had similar ratings.

Some comments said a simple and understandable method would support their ability to use the measurement for learning, growth, development and goal setting. Most comments noted the tension between a simple method that is easy to understand and an accurate method that adequately accounts for important complexities. Several commented that the current system is not simple or understandable, indicating they would support this as a criterion.

Total number of comments: 37.

Recommendation: Developing a method that is simple and understandable would support a culture of learning and professional development. However, this should be balanced with the ability to recognize relevant complexities and accurately measure performance.

24. The method is multi-dimensional; it incorporates a variety of key indicators of quality and effectiveness.

Respondents were evenly split on “Essential” and “Important” at 43% each for a total of 86%. A few people (4%) marked “Disagree.” Private vocational providers and Self-Insured tended to rate it higher

Some comments had suggestions of what the key indicators should be. Several commented on the need to balance multiple indicators of various complexities and simplicity. One response was “good luck!” A few of the respondents who marked “Disagree” commented

that the current system does not adequately incorporate the right variety of key indicators, indicating they would support this as a criterion if the right indicators were used.

Total number of comments: 29.

Recommendation: It is important to incorporate a variety of key indicators *and* keep it simple and understandable.

25. The method is adaptable to accommodate future needs

About a third of respondents (36%) said this is “Essential” and almost half of respondents (47%) said it is “Important” for a total of 83%. A few people (5%) marked “Disagree.” Claim managers and Private vocational providers had similar ratings.

Several comments supported the idea of building a method that might be adaptable. Suggestions were made to re-evaluate the method periodically as system goals or other key factors may change. However, this should not be done frequently, lightly or without providing training to all parties affected by any changes.

Total number of comments: 22.

Recommendation: Although it is not possible to foresee the future, the new system should be somewhat adaptable to change. It is also recommended that provisions are made for periodic checks to ensure the method continues to provide useful information. Implementing changes to the system should be done infrequently after due consideration and training for affected parties should be made available.

26. The method is realistic and practical, recognizing limited resources such as staff, technology, and budget.

About a third of respondents (36%) said this is “Essential” and almost half of respondents (49%) said it is “Important” for a total of 85%. A few people (6%) marked “Disagree.” Claim managers, Private vocational providers and Employers had similar ratings.

Several comments said that it takes time and budget to create an assessment method that is a useful, accurate and valid measure of “quality and effectiveness.” Most of the comments from respondents who also marked “Disagree” were emphatic that the necessary resources should be committed to the development of an evaluation method. Some said that L&I should hire the staff and provide the resources to “Do it right this time.” One recommendation was to consider a decentralized model, for example having an “independent provider certification like CARF” which could also serve to “drive quality assurance closer to the producer of the product.”

Total number of comments: 32.

Recommendation: Resource limitations should be a factor. However, respondents strongly indicated that if available resources were insufficient, it is important for L&I to find the necessary resources and/or explore a decentralized model.

27. The method is a valid measure of quality and effectiveness.

Two thirds of respondents (64%) said this is “Essential” and one quarter (28%) said it is “Important” for a total of 92%. A few people (5%) marked “Disagree.” Private vocational providers, L&I staff and Self-Insured rated this higher than other groups.

Some said it must be valid, reliable and independently verified. Approximately half of the comments stated that the definition of “quality and effectiveness” needed to be addressed first and some of these had specific suggestions including a focus on outcomes and limited to factors VRCs have control over. One out of five comments said it is impossible to create a valid measure.

Total number of comments: 32.

Recommendation: This should be a key factor. To maintain credibility of the entire assessment process, it is necessary that people have confidence that the assessment is a valid indicator of what it purports to measure. At the same time, it is important to recognize limitations of our ability to define, categorize, evaluate and measure the entirety of “quality and effectiveness” in a human service arena where each interaction contains important

unique and sometimes indefinable elements. The need for independent verification should be considered, and if approved, adequate resources provided for an effective verification process.

28. The method is designed to emphasize recent vocational work more than older casework.

Less than one third of respondents (31%) said this is “Essential” and more than one third (40%) said it is “Important” for a total of 71%. A few people (5%) marked “Disagree.” Private vocational providers, L&I staff and Self-Insured rated this higher than other groups.

Comments expressed a variety of opinions. Many supported using a time frame of a year or two to be able to assess current work and to provide an opportunity for VRCs to learn and improve. A few wanted all work included to see if it was consistently good or consistently had non-supportable closures. Others suggested dropping outlier referrals or having some way of distinguishing between common cause and special cause variation (e.g. using control limits or a 6 sigma method). Some mentioned the need for a minimum body of work before a score is given.

Total number of comments: 43.

29. The method creates incentives for high quality and effective vocational work.

Respondents were evenly split on “Essential” (39%) and “Important” (37%) for a total of 86%. Several people (9%) marked “Disagree.” Employers and Self-Insured tended to rate it higher

How respondents defined “incentives” influenced their ratings and comments. When it was defined as monetary, reactions were negative. When defined as receiving more work, reactions were positive. Many commented that professionalism in their work is very important to them and is not dependent upon “incentives.”

Total number of comments: 52.

Recommendation: This should not be a key factor because if other recommendations are adopted, the conditions necessary for the method to support high quality work will be met such as; the criteria for “quality and effectiveness” is well defined, the assessment method(s) accurately evaluates performance against the criteria and referrals are made using the criteria and assessment. Each of these conditions are included in other recommendations in this survey. The concept of monetary rewards or bonuses consistently received negative comments.

30. The method promotes ethical conduct by designing incentives that align with, or at least do not conflict with, ethical standards.

More than half of respondents (53%) rated this “Essential” and a third (31%) rated it “Important” for a total of 84%. A few (6%) marked “Disagree.” Private vocational counselors, Self-Insured and Injured worker/Labor tended to rate it higher.

How respondents defined “incentives” influenced their ratings and comments. When defined as an alignment between ethical codes of professional credentialing bodies and the rules and requirements of L&I, reactions were positive. When it was defined as some sort of motivator, reactions were negative.

Total number of comments: 35.

Recommendation: Vocational professionals and L&I should work together to identify areas of real or perceived misalignment between the ethical code of professional credentialing bodies and statutes, rules, expectations, or requests that are placed on VRCs. Options for addressing these could be explored.

31. The method provides opportunities to learn and improve. Feedback is available for the VRC to discern where they meet, exceed, or did not meet standards. Trial periods are provided for the VRC to demonstrate improvement before significant negative consequences are applied.

Half of respondents (49%) rated this “Essential” and a third (35%) rated it “Important” for a total of 84%. A few (4%) marked “Disagree.” Private vocational counselors and Self-Insured rated it higher.

Across all ratings, there was strong support for constructive feedback to VRCs to help clarify expectations and support improvement efforts. A few commented on the extent to which this responsibility could lie with L&I and/or the vocational profession. Some were concerned about what was meant by “trial periods” particularly regarding criteria for getting into and out of a trial period, and how long they might impact the VRC.

Total number of comments: 35.

Recommendation: Promoting a learning environment should be an important value for the method(s) as one way to improve work products and services. Opportunities for feedback should be designed into the process and VRCs should have an opportunity to demonstrate improved performance. If poor performance is severe or chronic, care should be taken in designing consequences.

32. The method includes a timely appeal process which provides opportunities to discuss evaluations and resolve issues.

Fewer than half of respondents (45%) rated this “Essential” and more than a third (39%) rated it “Important” for a total of 84%. Very few (2%) marked “Disagree.” L&I staff and Claim managers rated it lower than other groups.

Across all ratings and including Employers who commented, there was strong support for constructive opportunities for VRCs to receive feedback, clarify expectations, discuss evaluations and resolve issues. However concerns were noted about appropriate limits on time and cost, how to define what can be appealed, consistency in interpretations of criteria by L&I staff and whether the people/department who hears the appeals should be independent of the ones who provided the original assessment.

Total number of comments: 20.

Recommendation: An important value of the method(s) should be to promote a learning environment. Opportunities for feedback should be designed into the process including an opportunity to discuss and understand performance expectations. This may or may not be a

formal “appeal” process. Additional work may be needed to define what can be addressed, limits on time and cost, and specific process steps. Additional work may also be needed around increasing consistency of interpretations and the pros and cons of obtaining opinions from independent parties.

33. Implementation of the new measurement process occurs after adequate communication. Those who will be evaluated will have sufficient opportunity to revise their work practices before being subjected to the new methodology. Fewer than half of respondents (47%) rated this “Essential” and more than a third (38%) rated it “Important” for a total of 85%. Very few (3%) marked “Disagree.” L&I staff and Claim managers rated it slightly lower than other groups.

Across all ratings there was strong support for adequate education and communication before implementation of a new system. There was also widespread support for not excessively delaying implementation.

Total number of comments: 20.

Recommendation: The implementation process should provide for adequate education and communication before the method is used to make referrals, but should not excessively delay implementation. Many comments stated this issue is primarily about fairness.

34. The method is used by claim managers for selecting vocational referrals. Less than a quarter of respondents (22%) rated this “Essential” and more than a third (35%) rated it “Important” for a total of 57%. Several (11%) marked “Disagree.” Claim managers and Private vocational providers rated it lower than other groups.

Several comments stated that the purpose of developing an assessment system was to use it as a basis for referrals, supporting their rating of “Essential.” Comments containing caveats to the statement were accompanied by lower ratings and fell into two types; the extent to which the criteria and methodology are seen as valid indicators of “quality and effectiveness” and who should be involved with the selection. Many were unsure that any measurement system could accurately portray all necessary factors. Thus they dissented

from the statement and felt that individual discernment would be necessary. Many also emphasized the importance of trust in the working relationship between Claim managers and VRCs and how much this contributes to improved results. Some commented on problems with the uneven distribution of caseloads and suggested that this was evidence of a “good ol’ boy” network where the quality and effectiveness of services may not be the primary cause of referral patterns.

The issue of who should be involved in the selection process revealed a variety of opinions. Generally, claim managers said they wanted to be able to make the final selection. Most employers who commented wanted others involved or responsible for the selection of VRCs. They suggested including RTW coordinators and employers, or having the responsibility lie with the “voc department,” VSC or a “third person.”

Total number of comments: 76.

Recommendation: According to statute, the agency must use the performance criteria as a basis for referrals. The statute does not state that the criteria must be used exclusively and to the extent to which the method is unable to capture all relevant performance factors, some discretion by the referral source should be supported. Currently, the referral source is a claim manager. However, comments from employers consistently reflected a desire for some level of involvement in the selection process.

35. Referrals are equally distributed among qualified providers.

Ratings were evenly divided between “Essential” (30%) and “Important” (30%) for a total of 60%. Several (13%) marked “Disagree.” Claim managers and Employers rated this lower than other groups.

There was general support across all comments that VRCs who perform well should receive more referrals than VRCs who do not. Opinions and ratings differed when discussing three key issues:

- The extent to which referrals should be “equally” or “equitably” distributed - Strong opinions were expressed regarding current caseload distributions where one VRC

- may have hundreds of cases and another VRC, who may also be well qualified, receives few referrals. Some noted that one VRC may be able to handle large caseloads well while another VRC performs better with smaller caseloads, so the recommendation was that the agency not dictate caseload size. Some supported equal distribution by randomizing the referral process among providers who meet performance criteria. Others were opposed this. Some comments suggested it should be “equitable” instead of “equal” while others wanted the ability to select VRCs based on things such as case needs, expertise, or previous experience.
- The definition of “qualified”- Several respondents first wanted to know what the definition of “quality and effectiveness.” Some questioned if this would allow for unique needs and expertise to be considered in the referral such as VRCs who may be “highly qualified” or have specific areas of expertise, skills, ability to work with an employer, injured worker, etc.
 - Who makes the referrals - Employers stated that they want a voice in the selection of a VRC. A recommendation was also made that “clients” should be involved. Other statements in this survey also elicited comments about who should be involved with or responsible for making referrals including Claim managers, RTW coordinators, employers, injured workers/labor or having a third party such as a VSC make the referral.

Total number of comments: 77.

Recommendation: Referrals should be equitably distributed among qualified providers with due consideration given to the unique factors in a claim and the expertise and skills of the vocational provider. How this can be accomplished will elicit a variety of opinions. The MAQ team should explore options and provide recommendations.

36. A VRC is well matched to the needs in a particular claim; the VRC possesses the necessary knowledge and experience regarding such things as local labor markets, injury types, or culture.

Ratings were fairly evenly matched between “Essential” (38%) and “Important” (42%) for a total of 80%. Very few (4%) marked “Disagree.” Self-insured, Injured worker/Labor and Employers rated this higher than other groups.

Many commented that this is a critical piece of the process and noted the inherent conflict between this value and the concept of equal distribution of referrals. Concerns were about whether an assessment system could capture the necessary elements, if it could be done in an objective fashion or that Claim managers are able to accurately assess skill levels of various vocational consultants.

Total number of comments: 58.

Recommendation: To the extent that the assessment method(s) may be able to capture these aspects, they should be included. If the information would be too subjective or unreliable, these areas should be identified and left to the discretion of the referral source.

37. Measures of individual providers are clearly distinguished from measures of groups or systems.

Ratings were fairly evenly matched between “Essential” (37%) and “Important” (41%) for a total of 78%. Very few (4%) marked “Disagree.” Self-insured, Injured worker/Labor and Employers rated this higher than other groups.

Some respondents interpreted “group” to mean a vocational firm. Some felt the firm should be evaluated based on the success of the VRCs in that firm and others were concerned that a firm could balance their measure with a good performer and feed work to a poor performer within the firm. Several felt that VRCs are individuals and should be evaluated separately. No comments mentioned system measures. In almost half of the comments, the respondent said they did not understand the statement.

Total number of comments: 24.

Recommendation: The assessment method(s) should focus on performance measures for individual VRCs and distinguish these from measures of other participants or effects. To the extent possible, the process could also identify groups or teams who impact results of

referrals and identify measures of overall system health. Two possible approaches are the “Logic Model” or “Balanced Scorecard.”

38. The measures improve visibility and accountability of each person involved in the claim.

More than a quarter of respondents (29%) rated this “Essential” and half (50%) rated it “Important” for a total of 79%. Some (6%) marked “Disagree.”

Many comments in support of this statement felt it would be very beneficial to provide visibility of VRCs or interns who assist on a referral. Some want increased visibility of others involved such as physicians. Comments which disagreed with the statement indicated that they didn’t know how this could be done or stated that the statute only addressed VRC performance. Some said that claim managers were already held accountable and others said they did not know how, or if, claim managers were accountable.

Total number of comments: 36.

Recommendation: The statute addresses VRC performance. However, the performance of other people involved in the claim, including APs, CMs, employers, injured workers, etc, can have an impact on the outcome of the claim, and thus an impact on system results. The assessment method should focus on VRC performance and to the extent it may be able to also gather information about other participants, this could support a larger business need of understanding and improving overall system performance.

39. The process creates incentives for effective teamwork among all people involved with the claim.

One third of respondents (33%) rated this “Essential” and almost half (45%) rated it “Important” for a total of 78%. Some (6%) marked “Disagree.”

Comments indicated significant support for the concept of teamwork. As stated by a Claim manager, “Teamwork is always good.... The goal is to get all these moving parts to work together for the mutual benefit and general welfare of all. However, this does not always happen. “Some were concerned that different goals of some participants make it difficult to work as a team. Others were concerned that it would be difficult to assess. Others said the

focus for this assessment system should be on VRC performance, not on the performance of other participants.

Total number of comments: 36.

Recommendation: Teamwork should be supported as an important aspect of an effective system. To support teamwork, the elements of the system (rules, policies, ethical standards, processes, practices, and measures) should be aligned as much as possible. To enhance system performance, roles, responsibilities, and accountability practices could be clarified and communicated to all participants. Although the assessment method should focus on VRC performance it may also be possible to gather information about other participants. To the extent this might be possible; this could support a larger business need of assessing system health. Care should be taken in selecting measures since the wrong individual measures or too many measures can reduce rather than enhance teamwork.

40. L&I management uses results to evaluate and improve vocational systems and processes.

One third of respondents (35%) rated this “Essential” and almost half (47%) rated it “Important” for a total of 72%. Some (5%) marked “Disagree.” Self-Insured, L&I staff and Employers rated this higher than other groups.

Comments supported the idea of continuous improvement of vocational and claims systems. Some thought that information from the assessment method(s) could be useful. Some felt that the agency should use performance information to improve processes but has not done this well in the past. Some did not see how the assessment method(s) could provide useful information towards this end.

Total number of comments: 36.

Recommendation: Continuous improvement of systems and processes is important. If the new assessment system could provide information in support of this goal, and do so within reasonable resource constraints, the information should be collected and reported. L&I

management currently uses a variety of information sources for system analysis and improvement and information from the assessment system could augment, not exclude, current analysis.

41. The method is easy for claim managers to use.

One half of respondents (49%) rated this “Essential” and almost as many (41%) rated it “Important” for a total of 90%. Some (4%) marked “Disagree.” Claim managers, Self-Insured, and Employers rated this higher than other groups.

Comments supported a method that would be easy to use and intuitive, but not so simple that it would omit important information or be misleading or inaccurate.

Total number of comments: 25.

Recommendation: The method should balance ease of use with accuracy and sufficient information about the “quality and effectiveness” of a vocational provider.

42. L&I management uses the results to ensure that vocational services are cost-effective and add value to the claims management process.

Less than one third of respondents (30%) rated this “Essential” and almost half (48%) rated it “Important” for a total of 78%. Some (6%) marked “Disagree.” Employers and Self-Insured rated this higher than other groups.

Comments generally supported the importance of cost-effective services but strongly stated that this should not be the only factor. Many said that the short-term cost-cutting sometimes results in higher recidivism and higher system costs. Others stated the priority should be to obtain the appropriate outcome for the client and this may sometimes involve higher costs.

Total number of comments: 36.

Recommendation: Ensuring that vocational services add value is important in the management of the industrial insurance business. Comments indicate that obtaining appropriate and sustainable outcomes would be more effective and less expensive over the

long term than a short-term cost cutting strategy. To the extent that the new assessment system may contribute useful information about system health that information should be included in management's analysis and improvement efforts.

43. The method makes it easy for claim managers to distinguish among providers regarding key characteristics of quality and effectiveness that may be relevant for a particular referral.

Almost one third of respondents (29%) rated this "Essential" and almost half (48%) rated it "Important" for a total of 77%. Some (8%) marked "Disagree."

Across all ratings, people commented that the definition of "quality and effectiveness" is key, and the extent to which the method(s) considers complexities and is sustainable is also important. Positive ratings tended to assume that the method could adequately reflect "quality and effectiveness" whereas negative ratings seemed to feel this was unlikely or not possible. Several comments stated that all VRCs are well educated and trained and that the opening assumption should be they possess similar qualifications. One comment simply said, "That would be interesting..."

Total number of comments: 40.

Recommendation: Some aspects of the ideal assessment method(s) would be to have the right criteria for "quality and effectiveness," incorporate the right complexity factors, fairly represent the performance of providers, and provide the information in a simple but not simplistic manner. This should be the aim of the new assessment system. The development team should explore the extent to which this may be possible.

44. The method is integrated with other measurement and data tracking systems in the claims process.

One of five respondents (19%) rated this "Essential" and two of five (42%) rated it "Important" for a total of 61%. One quarter (26%) said it was "Optional." Some (4%) marked "Disagree."

Many comments said that their response would depend upon what other measurements were used or were unclear about the statement. A few suggested ways of using changes in unsustainable outcomes as a way of seeing if some providers are sacrificing quality in an attempt to get better scores. One suggested that the approach, focused on VRC

performance, should “be simple to administer, consistent with the goals and objectives of voc rehab, should be both qualitative and quantitative, should measure outcome and recidivism/claims reversals, include valid case difficulty adjustment, should include satisfaction surveys, should measure the full scope of services we are asked to perform, should measure total service success of the VRC (referral to success ratio), should be consistent with Quality Service Standards which mandate minimum service requirements for all VRC’s.”

Total number of comments: 28.

Recommendation: Develop criterion that includes key performance expectations and desired outcomes and use a variety of integrated method(s) to assess performance. Explore related measures that may indicate system health or “gaming” and consider integrating these measures on a case-by case basis. Related measures of system health may not formally be part of this assessment methodology, but may support improving system results.

45. IF YOU WOULD LIKE US TO CONSIDER OTHER CRITERIA, PLEASE ADD IT HERE.

No additional values criteria were submitted.