

IME Business and Labor Advisory Team Meeting

April 01, 2025

9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Present: Troy Parks, Karen Jost, Melissa Dunbar, Nancy Adams, Shannon Rushing, LaNae Lien, Knowrasa Patrick, Dane Henager, Neil Diemer, Chantelle Yeager, Dianne Whitten, Ann Silvernale, Breanna Deuel,

Guests: Ciara High, Joann Willyerd

Absent: Azadeh Farokhi, MD, Gary Kolonja, Lee Thomas, Gennia Wellington, Kathy Potvin, Cherell Fischer

Brief Summary of Activities:

- Announcements, Safety Message, & Introductions
- IME Program Updates
- SHB 1068 IME Recording Implementation
- Updates
- Open Discussion

Announcements & Safety Message:

Introductions were made. Cristy Miller is now managing IMEs along with Interpretation Services. Tanya Weber the IME ONC is retiring. The new ONC will be starting on the 16th. They will be introduced at next meeting. Ciara High was introduced as the acting ombuds person.

The agenda was reviewed.

The safety topic is about spring yard clean up. Make sure you are familiar with you equipment. Read the owner's manual and safety information. Make sure you are using ladders safely. Watch children and pets to make sure they don't get injured by lawn-care tools. Check your extension cords to make sure they are not damaged. Wear protective gear such as long pants, non-slip closed toe shoes, as well as eye and ear protection. If you are digging, know where your utilities are beforehand.

IME Program Updates:

Examiner Pool Update – Troy

Troy shared the examiner exit survey responses from 2024.

Troy gave a brief update on the examiner pool. The top 4 specialists and the total number of examiners have remained fairly consistent. The number of in-state and out-of-state examiners has also remained consistent with about 29% of examiners that are out-of-state.

Examiner requirements are listed in WAC 296-23-317. The link to the WAC was shared. Examiners send in their application. It is reviewed for all the necessary documents and staff perform primary source verifications. Before submitting their application, examiner must review the Medical Examiners' Handbook and take and pass the test. The certificate from passing the test is included with the application packet.

Troy shared a summary of the 2024 complaints. There were 145 complaints total. The majority were regarding examiners. Out of the 145 complaints, 25 involved recorded exams. The number of complaints is very small compared to the number of exams done. Less than 1% of exams have complaints.

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The complaint numbers for the first quarter of 2025 were shared. There have been 64 complaints so far. The specialties are the same as 2024. There have been 5 that involved recorded exams. The complaint types are also similar to the 2024 data.

Most complaints come from the worker or worker attorney. Some do come from the claim managers usually regarding the report. There are times when a complaint will come in from an Attending Provider as well.

The category Other can include scheduling or testimony issues.

Interpreter Services – Cristy

Cristy gave a quick update on Interpreter Services. The new interpreter scheduling system with new vendor SOSi WordBridge was rolled out in June 2024. In person, media, and scheduled telephonic interpretation was rolled out first. On demand telephonic services was rolled out in January 2025.

Some challenges have been extended hold times to get connected to operator. The vendor has hired more operators to help with this. If the provider has the information needed to bill for the services they can be directed right to an interpreter. The Department is working with providers and vocational staff to try and make sure they can preschedule when the appointment is scheduled, rather than calling the on demand phone number. If SOSi cannot secure an interpreter for on-demand telephonic services, they will transfer the call to CTS Language Link.

Cristy shared the data for number of provider accounts and active interpreters. The increase in provider accounts is likely due to better visibility on MyL&I for providers to sign up. The total number of active interpreters is 635. About 70 have not accepted any L&I referrals yet so SOSi is reaching out to them.

The success rate for IMEs is about 83.6% while the statewide success rate is about 91%. The statewide unfulfilled rate is about 7% while the IME unfulfilled rate is about 12%.

There have been some issues with interpreter bills not getting paid timely. Effective July 1 interpreters providing services will know who the employer and TPA is, and if claim is State Fund or Crime Victim. There are concerns that interpreters may not want to accept certain assignments if they do not get paid timely. The payer has 60 days to pay from the date invoice is received.

IME Recording Update - Troy

Troy gave an update on IME recording. The history around the ability to record an IME was shared. There were rules drafted for co-recording but that was put on hold. The Department decided instead to conduct a third party recording pilot. Workers could use this in lieu of using their device or in addition to using their own device. Examiners and firms can use this if the worker agrees to co-recording done by firm.

The desired outcomes is to see a reduction in delays when a worker chooses to record their exam. This option provides less risk and administrative burden in maintaining recordings. This will also hopefully mitigate concerns around chain of custody and misuse of recordings. It will also help inform future policy and rulemaking.

The process flow was shared. The worker notifies the IME firm at least 7 days prior to exam of their intent to record. The firm then is able to offer this third party recording. Examiners will obtain

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verbal consent at the start of the recording. The worker will also be provided an informational sheet on how to get copy of the recording.

Information about the app, how it's downloaded and used, was shared. The Department will be measuring the impact of the pilot, looking at the number of recordings completed, and referral success rate. A graph was shared on referral cancellations due to recording was shared. When the rule went into effect in July 2023 the cancelation rate was about 59%. It is now at 9.6%.

There have been 28 recordings so far through the pilot. Currently three IME firms are signed up and there have been 46 device authorization codes provided. The third party recording is done through app, is primarily examiner using app or examiner and worker, Worker is not using the app but will have access to recording, recording is not saved on device uploaded to the cloud and saved on MM server, when worker wants a copy of the recording they can submit a request and a secure link will be sent to them to view Any corolation in complaints yet with these exams, may be too early but so far no complaints, no workers have requesteds recordings

Updates:

Claims – Nancy

There are no updates and no questions were asked.

Scheduling – Shannon

about 12500 for 2024 fiscal year, no new data on

Self-Insurance – LaNae

There are no updates and no questions were asked.

Open Discussion:

curious to see how pilot goes, hoping it solves a lot of problems

Know there is a toggle when IME is going to be scheduled, CM usually calls to let them know an IME is going to be scheduled, try to let them know right away if going to be recorded and if co-recording, found when this is used there is less issue with rescheduling, not sure if there is a training or memo of this in the system

There is a radial button that CM can use, one problem can be that calls are done very early on and they don't actually reach the party they are calling, this does not negate that worker has to send in intent to record, if staff do get a hold of someone and they are aware there will be an intent to record then they should be using the button. There can be times when worker changes their mind on if they want to record, CM has to update this, it is a manual process to update this. seems some staff are not aware of radial button

Would be helpful to have presentation from ombuds office on their role, would like to have this, next meeting is 8/8

With third party recording, 28 recordings have any had to be pulled to review, have only reviewed

Future Meetings:

Tuesday	August 12, 2025	9:30am – 11:30
Tuesday	December 09, 2025	9:30am – 11:30
Tuesday	April xx, 2026	9:30am – 11:30