

IME Business and Labor Advisory Team Meeting
December 6, 2022
9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Present: Kristen Baldwin-Boe, Melissa Dunbar, Karen Jost, Tanya Weber, Troy Parks, Nancy Adams, Stuart Bammert, Dane Henager, Gary Kolonja, Knowrasa Patrick, LaNae Lien, Azadeh Farokhi, Kelli Zimmerman, Dianne Whitten, Ann Silvernale, Lisa Vivian, Lloyd Brooks, Kathy Potvin, Chantelle Yeager, Donna Egeland

Guests: Carolyn Logue, Joann Willyerd

Absent: Cheri Ward, Richard Clyne

Brief Summary of Activities:

- Announcements, Safety Message, & Introductions
- IME Program Updates
- Quality Measures
- Updates
- Open Discussion

Announcements & Safety Message:

Kristen reviewed Zoom meeting etiquette.

Our safety topic today is about safe winter driving. Make sure your lights and wipers are working and your tires have tread. Drive for the conditions, slower speeds and acceleration, do not use cruise control. Be careful of shady patches that could hide black ice. If possible, wait to travel once conditions improve.

Karen introduced Azadeh Farokhi, the new Associate Medical Director, and Troy Parks, the new Provider Quality and Compliance (PQC) Manager.

IME Program Updates:

IME Telemedicine WAC – Kristen

The department was mandated by the legislature to create rules on how to accommodate the worker when there is no IME specialist in a reasonably convenient location to include how to govern telemedicine IMEs. That was put on hold last winter due to other priorities. This work has now resumed. Chantelle and Kathy had volunteered to participate in stakeholdering the draft rule language. Carolyn Logue and other IME examiners will also be participating. Kristen will contact participants this month to gather everyone's availability for meetings.

Temporary Payment Policies – Kristen

Early in the pandemic a temporary payment policy was put in place that allowed telemedicine exams for certain specialties and allowed firms to bill for record reviews if the worker no-showed. The original temporary policy will expire at the end of this month. A new temporary payment policy will take effect January 01, 2023. This will continue to allow telemedicine IMEs until the permanent rules are in place. The pre-authorization for record reviews for no-shows will be ending.

Medical Examiners' Handbook – Kristen

Work on updating the Medical Examiners' Handbook will begin in January 2023. Suggestions and edits are accepted throughout the year. A group of experts meet and review the suggestions January through March and the updates are published at the beginning of July. If you have any suggestions, they can be sent to Kristen or Melissa.

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Updates – Troy

At the September Roundtable meeting the department received feedback from the IME Coalition. There was further dialog after the meeting regarding issues and concerns the IME firms have. In response, two site visits have been scheduled in January with two IME firms. The hope is these visits will help the department staff observe and gain insight into the firms' administrative processes. There are five areas that will be the focus of these visits; scheduling/logistics, interpreter requests, collating/record review, diagnostics, and staffing.

Quality Measures

Quality Data Collection – Tanya

PQC has been collecting quality data since January 2019. The primary goal is to improve outcomes. For future planning, staff are going to look at the data being collected to make sure it is what is needed, and if there is anything else that should be collected. The data will then be analyzed to identify any trends.

Some of Tanya's report quality data is for Self-Insured (SI) IMEs, however, it is limited. SI reports are only requested when there are no State Fund (SF) reports to review. We have easy access to state fund IME reports. When there are no SF reports to review for an examiner, a letter is sent to the examiner and firms they work with asking if they have conducted any IMEs for self-insured employers. If they have conducted IMEs for SI, they are asked to provide the claim numbers for the last 10 SI exams. If we get a response, a staff member then works on requesting the reports for those exams. This process can take several weeks.

The SI data is limited because IME reports are not easily available to L&I unless we request the self-insured employer to provide it. Department staff have no way to know which claims to look at until the examiner responds to our letter. The EDI billing data often does not include the name of the examiner for IME bills. On the state fund side, billing data can be pulled for each examiner and claim numbers are available so that reports can be easily found in our electronic files. The suggestion was made that maybe the team could meet with WSIA at one of their meetings to discuss and improve the process for gathering the SI reports.

Feedback and Complaints

Troy Shared the exit and retention survey data for 2022. There have been five responses to the exit surveys and 19 responses to the retention surveys. Based on the retention survey data most responding examiners are generally satisfied conducting IMEs. When asked on a 1-10 scale with 10 being the most satisfied, about 84% of respondents chose five or higher.

Troy also shared the complaint data for 2022. In this year there have been 177 complaints. The top three specialties are orthopedist, psychiatrist, and neurologist. A majority of the complaints were regarding the examiner.

There are some process improvements being made regarding civil rights and discrimination complaints. There are different ways complaints come in. Improvements are being made around when a complaint is received and reviewed to see if any referrals need to be made and how that is done in a timely manner. The employee will identify a potential complaint and make the referral. They will have an ongoing connection with Civil Rights program until the referral is closed. There is a draft process right now and it will be put into use shortly.

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Updates:

Claims – Nancy

Nancy gave an update on the IME data report. Staff are finalizing the data they have been reviewing. The report should be published sometime this month.

The IME protest data was shared as well. This is only state fund protest data and is from June to September 2022. About 1% of IMEs done have a protest filed. Most protests are regarding the purpose of the exam. For a majority of the protests, the IME was found to be appropriate.

Examples of “other” reasons for protests include contention that claim was not ready, there was missing medical info, AP requested the IME in error, or the purpose was incorrectly stated by CM.

Staff are going to continue to gather this data and will have more to share at future meetings.

Scheduling – Stuart

Stuart shared scheduling and referral data. The number of claims received was compared to the number of IME referrals. IME referrals dropped in January 2021 and have remained fairly consistent since then.

Self-Insurance – Kelli

Kelli gave a quick update regarding the IME data report. The EDI data that Nancy mentioned was just pulled and the report should be out the middle of next week.

The self-insurance (SI) program is also collecting protest data. This can be coordinated with Nancy to make sure SI can pull similar data. That could be something possibly shared at the next meeting. The contact for this data would be Nicole Mitchell.

Open Discussion:

Lloyd Brooks is leaving the advisory committee after this meeting, and Rick Clyne is no longer with the Farm Bureau. The suggestion was made that it might be helpful to get someone from the retro program for these meetings. Rick Clyne was in that position. Mike Ratko is checking on a new appointment.

Public Comments:

Carolyn asked if there was any consideration to extend the temporary policy for record reviews for no-shows possibly through winter. Most all of the emergency Covid policies are ending. The telemedicine temporary payment policy is extended in order to remain in compliance with SB6440 until the permanent rules are final. Staff did look at how often record reviews were being requested for pre-authorization and those requests dropped down in 2022.

The IME firms are short staffed as it is, so it would be helpful not to give them more administrative burden by asking them to look up examiner's SI reports for the ONC review.

It is good to see that the number of protests and complaints are low compared to the number of exams actually being done.

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The 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 April 04, 2023 9:30am – 11:30
Thursday August 10, 2023 9:30am – 11:30
Tuesday December 05, 2023 9:30am – 11:30