

NEW SECTION

WAC 296-23-358 What happens when there is no approved independent medical exam (IME) provider in the specialty needed available in a reasonably convenient location for the worker? When there is no approved examiner in the worker's community or in a reasonably convenient location for the worker, the department or self-insurer may make alternate arrangements for the examination including, but not limited to:

(1) Considering whether a consultation might be a sufficient alternative;

(2) Using telemedicine where appropriate;

(3) Notifying the worker or their representative before scheduling the IME in the nearest location available. In this case:

(a) Travel must not exceed any travel restrictions imposed by the attending provider unless alternative methods of travel will overcome the travel limitations.

(b) The department or self-insured employer will assist the worker with travel accommodations when requested by the worker.

(c) Travel accommodations are paid by the department or self-insured employer as listed in the fee schedule.

NEW SECTION

WAC 296-23-359 When is telemedicine appropriate for an independent medical exam (IME)? (1) The following exams may be conducted via telehealth:

(a) Mental health;

(b) Dermatology;

(c) Speech when there is no documented hearing loss;

(d) Kidney function;

(e) Hematopoietic system;

(f) Endocrine.

(2) The terms telehealth and telemedicine are used interchangeably and have the same requirements as in-person visits. Telemedicine may be appropriate to effectively conduct an independent medical exam when:

(a) Face-to-face services by a qualified medical provider can be delivered through a real-time, two-way, audio video connection, and complies with all federal, state, and local rules and laws; and

(b) A worker is able and willing to participate in an exam via telemedicine; and

(c) The department or self-insured employer, and worker, have agreed a telemedicine IME is appropriate; these individuals should also agree to the location of the worker during the exam; and

(d) The agreement is documented in the claim file; and

(e) A physical or hands-on exam is not required.

(3) Upon request of the department or self-insured employer and with the agreement of the worker, a telemedicine IME may be approved on a case-by-case basis for additional specialties not listed under subsection (1) of this section.