

# I-Decisions Inc.

*An Independent Review Organization*

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## Notice of Independent Review Decision

**DATE OF REVIEW:** 5-14-2008

**IRO CASE #:**

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICE OR SERVICES IN DISPUTE**

Work Hardening Program 20 Sessions

### **A DESCRIPTION OF THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR EACH PHYSICIAN OR OTHER HEALTH CARE PROVIDER WHO REVIEWED THE DECISION**

Doctor of Chiropractic  
AADEP Certified  
Whole Person Certified  
TWCC ADL Doctor  
Certified Electrodiagnostic Practitioner  
Member of the American of Clinical Neurophysiology  
Clinical practice 10+ years in Chiropractic WC WH Therapy

### **REVIEW OUTCOME**

Upon independent review the reviewer finds that the previous adverse determination/adverse determinations should be:

- Upheld (Agree)
- Overturned (Disagree)
- Partially Overturned (Agree in part/Disagree in part)

Upon independent review the reviewer finds that the requested 20 sessions of a work hardening program is not medically necessary.

### **INFORMATION PROVIDED TO THE IRO FOR REVIEW**

Adverse Determination Letters, 3/20/08, 4/16/08  
ODG Guidelines and Treatment Guidelines  
Letter to IRO, 5/7/08  
Health Care, 4/8/08, 11/6/07, 3/6/08, 3/14/08  
ODG, Low Back, Work Conditioning

Employers First Report of Injury,  
 PT, 1/14/08  
 MD, 1/15/08  
 DC, 3/20/08  
 MD, 3/21/07  
 MD and APRN-BC, FP, 3/15/07  
 Carrier Notes, 1/23/08, 2/15/08  
 Previous Adverse Determination Letters, 3/1/8/08  
 4/16/08

**PATIENT CLINICAL HISTORY [SUMMARY]:**

The injured employee was involved in an occupational injury . The injured employee was injured when she lifted a stack of metal pans and injured her low back. The injured employee was diagnosed with a lumbar strain and prescribed medication. The injured employee underwent physical therapy at Medical Group. The injured employee has had 9 sessions of therapy in 2006 and 12 sessions in 2007. The injured employee has undergone a psychological evaluation. She was seen by a designated doctor and assessed at MMI on 1-15-2008 and assigned a 0%IR. FCE dated 1-14-2008 indicated that the injured employee was able to return to her normal job duties. Spinal surgeon, MD recommended a formal physical therapy program three times a week for four weeks. The injured employee was sent to therapy and a request for work hardening was indicated. 20 sessions of work hardening are being requested at this time.

**ANALYSIS AND EXPLANATION OF THE DECISION INCLUDE CLINICAL BASIS, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS USED TO SUPPORT THE DECISION**

The requested 20 sessions of a work hardening program is not medically necessary. Upon review of the provided medical records I find that the injured employee currently does not meet the required guidelines for a full 20-session work hardening program according to the ODG Admission Criteria:

<p>Work conditioning, work hardening</p>	<p>Recommended as an option, depending on the availability of quality programs. Physical conditioning programs that include a cognitive-behavioural approach plus intensive physical training (specific to the job or not) that includes aerobic capacity, muscle strength and endurance, and coordination; are in some way work-related; and are given and supervised by a physical therapist or a multidisciplinary team, seem to be effective in reducing the number of sick days for some workers with chronic back pain, when compared to usual care. However, there is no evidence of their efficacy for acute back pain. These programs should only be utilized for select patients with substantially lower capabilities than their job requires. The best way to get an injured worker back to work is with a modified duty RTW program (see <a href="#">ODG Capabilities &amp; Activity Modifications for Restricted Work</a>), rather than a work conditioning program, but when an employer cannot provide this, a work conditioning program specific to the work goal may be helpful. (<a href="#">Schonstein-Cochrane, 2003</a>) Multidisciplinary biopsychosocial rehabilitation has been</p>
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	<p>shown in controlled studies to improve pain and function in patients with chronic back pain. However, specialized back pain rehabilitation centers are rare and only a few patients can participate in this therapy. It is unclear how to select who will benefit, what combinations are effective in individual cases, and how long treatment is beneficial, and if used, treatment should not exceed 2 weeks without demonstrated efficacy (subjective and objective gains). (<a href="#">Lang, 2003</a>) Work Conditioning should restore the client's physical capacity and function. Work Hardening should be work simulation and not just therapeutic exercise, plus there should also be psychological support. Work Hardening is an interdisciplinary, individualized, job specific program of activity with the goal of return to work. Work Hardening programs use real or simulated work tasks and progressively graded conditioning exercises that are based on the individual's measured tolerances. Work conditioning and work hardening are not intended for sequential use. They may be considered in the subacute stage when it appears that exercise therapy alone is not working and a biopsychosocial approach may be needed, but single discipline programs like work conditioning may be less likely to be effective than work hardening or <a href="#">interdisciplinary programs</a>. (<a href="#">CARF, 2006</a>) (<a href="#">Washington, 2006</a>) Use of Functional Capacity Evaluations (FCE's) to evaluate return-to-work show mixed results. See the <a href="#">Fitness For Duty Chapter</a>.</p> <p><b>Criteria for admission to a Work Hardening Program:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Physical recovery sufficient to allow for progressive reactivation and participation for a minimum of 4 hours a day for three to five days a week.</li> <li>2. A defined return to work goal agreed to by the employer &amp; employee: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. A documented specific job to return to with job demands that exceed abilities, OR</li> <li>b. Documented on-the-job training</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. The worker must be able to benefit from the program. Approval of these programs should require a screening process that includes file review, interview and testing to determine likelihood of success in the program.</li> <li>4. The worker must be no more than 2 years past date of injury. Workers that have not returned to work by two years post injury may not benefit.</li> <li>5. Program timelines: Work Hardening Programs should be completed in 4 weeks consecutively or less.</li> </ol> <p><b>ODG Physical Therapy Guidelines – Work Conditioning</b> 10 visits over 8 weeks</p> <p>See also <a href="#">Physical therapy</a> for general PT guidelines.</p>
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In review of the documentation submitted the injured employee does not meet the admission criteria for 20 sessions of a work hardening program. The documents reviewed do not meet #2 and #3. Additionally treatment should not exceed 2 weeks without demonstrated efficacy. Medical documentation submitted for review does not provide significant objective findings to warrant a full 20-sessions of work hardening. A

modified return to work with gradual return to full duty has been determined to provide the best outcome per ODG.

**A DESCRIPTION AND THE SOURCE OF THE SCREENING CRITERIA OR OTHER CLINICAL BASIS USED TO MAKE THE DECISION:**

- ACOEM- AMERICAN COLLEGE OF OCCUPATIONAL & ENVIRONMENTAL MEDICINE UM KNOWLEDGEBASE
- AHCPR- AGENCY FOR HEALTHCARE RESEARCH & QUALITY GUIDELINES
- DWC- DIVISION OF WORKERS COMPENSATION POLICIES OR GUIDELINES
- EUROPEAN GUIDELINES FOR MANAGEMENT OF CHRONIC LOW BACK PAIN
- INTERQUAL CRITERIA
- MEDICAL JUDGEMENT, CLINICAL EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE IN ACCORDANCE WITH ACCEPTED MEDICAL STANDARDS
- MERCY CENTER CONSENSUS CONFERENCE GUIDELINES
- MILLIMAN CARE GUIDELINES
- ODG- OFFICIAL DISABILITY GUIDELINES & TREATMENT GUIDELINES
- PRESSLEY REED, THE MEDICAL DISABILITY ADVISOR
- TEXAS GUIDELINES FOR CHIROPRACTIC QUALITY ASSURANCE & PRACTICE PARAMETERS
- TEXAS TACADA GUIDELINES
- TMF SCREENING CRITERIA MANUAL
- PEER REVIEWED NATIONALLY ACCEPTED MEDICAL LITERATURE (PROVIDE A DESCRIPTION)
- OTHER EVIDENCE BASED, SCIENTIFICALLY VALID, OUTCOME FOCUSED GUIDELINES (PROVIDE A DESCRIPTION)