Pre-employment examination
Victor Van Hee, MD

Pre-employment physical exams ensure new workers are assigned safe and suitable jobs. This protects employers and employees by identifying potential risks and essential work accommodations.

Once a contingent employment offer has been made to a prospective employee, HealthPartners Occupational Medicine physicians can perform the pre-employment exam. In Minnesota, pre-employment exams are governed by Minnesota Statute 363A.20, Subd. 8.

To comply with legal requirements, the job offer must be conditioned only on the results of the pre-employment exam. The exam must test only for essential job-related abilities. The exam must also be required of all applicants offered the position.

The pre-employment exam is usually combined with a pre-work screen, or a series of tasks designed to assess a worker’s ability to perform the physical demands of a job. An accurate job description is essential. The physician uses this job description and the exam to determine if an applicant can safely perform a job without accommodations.

After the exam and pre-work screen, the physician gives the employer an assessment of the applicant’s ability. If the applicant can’t perform the essential job functions, the physician describes any needed accommodations.

Benefits of pre-employment medical exams include:
• Fewer workplace injuries – a safer workplace
• Matching the abilities of the applicant with a job
• Reducing employee turnover and recruitment costs
• Reducing work comp claims and premiums

Contact Kathy Oppel at 651-293-8275 to learn more.

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I completed my residencies in Internal Medicine and Occupational Medicine at the University of Washington in 2009. After directing the university’s Occupational Medicine Residency Program, I joined Park Nicollet in 2013. I practice at Park Nicollet Clinic in St. Louis Park and Chanhassen. I enjoy treating patients with work-related injuries and partner with employers to provide excellent industrial services. In my spare time I run, build electronic gadgets and play Minecraft and have mock light-saber battles with my 7 year-old son.
Hiring physically qualified workers
Robin Peterson, PT

For many companies, 30 to 50 percent of injuries occur among new hires within their first year. Forty to 50 percent of these injuries are musculoskeletal disorders. This includes sprains, strains, cumulative trauma, herniated discs and rotator cuff tears.

Matching new hires to the correct level of physical work helps build an injury-free workforce. Pre-work, post-offer functional screening (PWS) is used for new applicants and those transferring to new jobs. PWS tests a job applicant’s functional ability to safely perform a job’s physical requirements.

Tests should be created by trained and certified physical and occupational therapists. This ensures tests are compliant with ADA, EEOC, OSHA and other government requirements.

If a worker can’t functionally perform job duties, an injury is much more likely to occur. Recovery with a return to full duties is more difficult if the employee couldn’t perform the job prior to injury. Research has demonstrated excellent testing ROI results, from 3:1 to 18:1.

The ability to hire better employees provides a competitive advantage. The ability to keep employees at work is also critical to business success. Healthy workers help you meet customers’ expectations and deliver products on time and on budget.

Drug screening in the workplace
In Minnesota, employer testing of job applicants and employees for drugs and alcohol is governed by the Minnesota Drug and Alcohol Testing in the Workplace Act (DATWA) Minn.Stat.181.950-181.957.

When can an employer drug test?
• Pre-employment – After a conditional offer has been extended.

• Reasonable suspicion – Based on probable cause with documented and objective/observable signs and symptoms. Supervisors should be trained to determine reasonable suspicion.

• Post-accident/first workplace injury – Based on objective criteria. Occurs during the same time period.

Under DATWA, employers may not request or require a job applicant to undergo drug or alcohol testing unless the employer has adopted a written testing policy. See statutes for advice on developing your company’s policy.

HealthPartners Occupational & Environmental Medicine (HP-OEM) Department offers a variety of drug screens to assist your company’s drug and alcohol testing policy.