



# Keys to Effective Work Hardening and Limited Duty Programs

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# How does it all fit in?

## Industrial Rehabilitation Process



The WHO

The WHAT

The WHY

The WHEN

The HOW

# Who are the Industrial Rehab Specialists?

- Occupational Therapist
- Physical Therapist
- Exercise Physiologist
- Vocational Evaluator
- Occupational Nurse

Depends on each state's  
licensing and workers'  
compensation laws



# What are the services?



**Functional Capacity Evaluation**

**Work Hardening Program**

**Work Conditioning Program**

**Job Analysis**

**Limited Duty Program**



# Functional Capacity Evaluation

An objective determination  
of the level of function.



# The Functional Capacity Evaluation Determines...

- Ready for return to work full duty
- Ready for limited duty work
- Ready for treatment
- Objectify symptom magnification
- Identify present capacities



# Components of the FCE

**Medical History**

**Musculoskeletal Assessment**

**Functional Findings**

**Worker Performance**



# What is Work Hardening?

“a highly structured, goal oriented, individualized treatment program designed to return the person to work.” Work hardening programs use **real or simulated work activities** designed to restore **physical, behavioral, and vocational** function.





# The Benefits of Work Hardening

**Improves musculoskeletal status**

ROM, strength, endurance

**Increases functional abilities**

physical demand level, abilities,  
workplace tolerance

**Improves worker performance**

symptom management, symptom  
magnification, worker traits



# Improves Musculoskeletal Status

- ◆ Range of Motion
- ◆ Strength
- ◆ Neurological Status/Endurance



# Increase Functional Abilities

- ◆ Physical Demand Level
- ◆ Functional Abilities
- ◆ Workplace Tolerance

# Improve Worker Performance



- ◆ Symptom Management
- ◆ Symptom Magnification
- ◆ Worker Traits



# What is Work Conditioning?

“a work related, intensive, and goal-oriented treatment program specifically designed to restore an individual’s **systemic, neuro-muscular (strength, endurance, flexibility, etc.) and cardiopulmonary function.**” The objective of the work conditioning program is to restore the client’s physical capacity and function so the client can “return to work”.

APTA



# Work Hardening vs. Work Conditioning

## Hardening

4 hrs. to full time

5 days a week

Extension of OT and  
PT

Addresses physical  
behavioral and  
vocation function

## Conditioning

2 to 3 hours a day

2 to 3 days a week

Extension of PT

Addresses

systemic, neuro-  
muscular, and  
cardiopulmonary



# What is the Job Analysis?

## **Job Demand Analysis**

Itemization of the critical job demands

## **Task Analysis**

Detailed inventory of the frequency, duration, and forces required for the critical job demands

## **Ergonomic Evaluation**

Mathematical analysis of the physical aspects that might be considered hazardous

Key



# What is Limited Duty?

**Modification** of general job duties or specific job tasks

**Alternative** job duties of regular job or specific job tasks

**Transitional** duties of general job duties or specific job tasks

Modified Duty, Light Duty, Restricted Duty





# The Benefits of Limited Duty

**Improves Musculoskeletal status**  
endurance

**Improves Functional abilities**  
workplace tolerance

**Improves worker performance**  
reinforces symptom management,  
maintains worker traits



# Modified Duty Techniques

- ◆ Job Pacing
- ◆ Job Rotation
- ◆ Stretching breaks
- ◆ Positional changes
- ◆ Assistive or ergonomic devices

# Development of the Limited Duty Program



- ◆ Performing the FCE
- ◆ Completing a Job Analysis
- ◆ Coaching the employee
- ◆ Educating the supervisor/employer
- ◆ Communicating with the doctor and other health care team members
- ◆ Providing Work Conditioning



Combining Limited Duty and Work Conditioning will maximize the worker's Musculoskeletal, functional and worker performance.



When is the right time to start  
the process?



# Return to work hierarchy

- ◆ Same employer, same job
- ◆ Same employer, different job
- ◆ Different employer, same job
- ◆ Different employer, different job
- ◆ On the job training
- ◆ Retraining for new career
- ◆ Self employment
- ◆ Independent living