

Job Analysis as a Practical Vocational Task Assignment

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As a rehabilitation case coordinator, one of the services I provide is completing on-site job analysis related to assigned workers' compensation claims. Job analysis is the basis for written job descriptions used by our EMC insureds, as well as with outside employers if an injured worker cannot return to work (RTW) with their employer of injury. Job analysis is typically assigned with workers' compensation claims, but can also apply to personal injury and liability situations. Job analysis is best used as an early intervention strategy, but it applies to both transitional and full return-to-work scenarios. Job analysis can help physical therapists design clinical programs for injured workers during their healing periods.

Once completed, an accurately written job description is used as an informational tool with the treating physician who can review the job duties and match these to the injured worker's functional abilities. The physician is asked for a medically based decision on the worker's ability to return to work based on the job description (JD). Any modifications needed on the job can be pinpointed by the physician and considered by the employer — historically most modifications can be arranged in these circumstances.

Please note, videotape and photo attachments are becoming commonplace as a supplement to the written description to better communicate about the work environment and work activities. Pictures can literally say a thousand words to the other individuals who may also review the job description during the life of a claim (i.e., attorneys, claimants, insureds, and judges/juries). More information can be found later in this article about the processes used to gather reliable job-related information, as well as the logic and professional ethics behind the use of this information.

Please see the chart below for examples that show how job analysis assisted the claims process.

Return-To-Work Problem And Example	Solution
No written job description existed <u>Example</u> — Cement truck driver wants to return to work, but physician is unsure of the claimant's ability to perform the job tasks.	A written job description was created and provided details about the job requirements. Physician could then make an accurate decision about the driver returning to full or modified work.
Worker has pain problems after RTW <u>Example</u> — Sewing machine operator received physician's approval to return to work. But upon return, the worker had ongoing pain problems.	Job analysis with ergonomic assessment was completed. It provided information so job modifications could be made, which allowed worker to decrease pain with tasks and remain on the job.
Worker has a modified job available <u>Example</u> — Assembler has a modified duty assignment available. Physician needs more information to determine if worker can perform the modified job tasks.	Treating physician was presented a job analysis of the modified duty assignment. Physician could then authorize worker to return to modified duty work.
Employer wants worker to return to work <u>Example</u> — Receptionist is close to being able to complete her normal job duties but recovery is slow and her employer is impatient.	Job analysis updated the worker's regular job duties and allowed the physician to specify what duties could be done during the healing period — full release was given later.
Modified duty may become regular full duty	Job descriptions of the claimant's regular duty and other positions allowed the employer and

<p><u>Example</u> — Waste water treatment worker could not return to job of injury, but could be trained for another position.</p>	<p>physician to work together to outline appropriate permanent job duties for the injured worker.</p>
<p>Rehabilitation for return to job of injury <u>Example</u> — Food service worker wants to return to the job of injury. Employer is unsure if it is possible for the worker to perform the same job duties, even with rehabilitation.</p>	<p>An updated job description provided to the physician and therapist allowed clinical “practice” of the job duties before any RTW took place. Modified duty, and ultimately full duty, was successfully assigned to the worker.</p>

Job analysis has been used for decades (since the 1930s) based on procedures utilized by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). As part of their professional education, vocational case managers have been trained in the use of DOL terminology to include the Critical Demands of Work Definitions. It is important for a job analysis to be done methodically (where everyone talks the same DOL language and uses objective procedures).

Job analysis is best accomplished through direct observation of the job. Videotaping or still photography can supplement the written description, but this is not always necessary.

When used, video supplements and photography are meant to be visual supplements for the treating physician who has not seen the actual job. **These visual aids are not complete without the written job description, which is the primary piece of information.**

It is important to note, videotape supplements to written job descriptions **are NOT surveillance products. The ethical rehabilitation counselor performing the job analysis will NOT be part of a surveillance request, nor allow their assignment to be applied to activities involving any kind of surveillance.**

According to the DOL, the categories of required job information include:

- The specific worker functions
- What gets done in terms of methods, procedures, processes, using basic skills
- The materials used, products produced, subject matter dealt with and services rendered
- The machines, equipment, tools and work aids used (work devices)
- General educational development (GED) in terms of levels of reasoning, mathematics and language
- Vocational preparation in terms of vocational schooling, prerequisite work experience, on-the-job training, other job training time and specific vocational preparation
- Aptitudes and interests
- Temperaments
- Physical demands and working conditions

Commonly used methods of collecting job-related information as described by the DOL are:

- Completing questionnaires
- Work diaries or logs
- Task inventories
- Position descriptions
- Direct observation
- Interview with workers and supervisors
- Group interview

- Observational interviews (a very objective based method because it involves firsthand observation, it provides an opportunity to sift essential and nonessential facts, and it permits workers to describe as well as exhibit job functions)

The written description is to be reviewed and given final approval by the employer, as evidenced by their signature and date on the document.

Do you have questions concerning job analysis and job descriptions? Call Kate Benson Larson at 515-345-2494.

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