

FAQ about FCE & Work Hardening

What is the difference between work hardening, work conditioning and work simplification?

Work Conditioning (WC): A rehabilitative approach used to restore a client's physical capacity, performance and function with the goal of safe return to work. This goal is achieved through having the client perform job-specific, simulated work tasks. WC sessions are generally of greater intensity, frequency and duration in comparison to a traditional therapy session.

Work Hardening (WH): A comprehensive multidisciplinary rehabilitative approach used to restore a client's physical capacity, performance and function with the goal of safe return to work. This goal is achieved through having the client perform job-specific, simulated work tasks. WH may include transitioning the client from simulated task performance to actual task performance in the natural work environment.

Work Simplification (WS): This is a therapeutic approach that focuses on easing the demands of a given task or activity. Efficient and effective means of task completion are sought and practiced through WS.

AOTA's Definition

Work Conditioning (WC): The occupational therapist uses a systematic approach to restore the performance skills of workers recovering from long-term injury or illness. There is a focus on restoring musculoskeletal and cardiovascular systems, as well as safely performing work tasks. This is typically achieved through work simulation and individualized interventions to improve physical capacity that occur 3 to 5 days per week for 2 to 4 hours per session.

Work Hardening (WH): This approach is similar to work conditioning; however, it is multidisciplinary and can involve psycho-medical counseling, ergonomic evaluation, job coaching and/or transitional work services. Treatment is typically provided 5 days per week for 2 to 4-plus hours per day. Clients in work-hardening programs may progress to transitional work programming by actually performing job duties at their place of employment. If necessary, final adaptations and/or reasonable accommodations can be determined during this period of transition.

Reference

American Occupational Therapy Association. (2017). Work Rehabilitation. Retrieved from <https://www.aota.org/About-Occupational-Therapy/Professionals/WI/Work-Rehab.aspx>

APTA's Definition

Work Conditioning: An intensive, work-related, goal-oriented conditioning program designed specifically to restore systemic neuro-musculoskeletal functions (e.g., joint integrity and mobility, muscle performance (including strength, power and endurance), motor function (motor control and motor learning), range of motion (including muscle length), and cardiovascular/pulmonary functions (e.g. aerobic capacity/endurance, circulation, and ventilation and respiration/gas exchange). The objective of the work-conditioning program is to restore physical capacity and function to enable the patient/client to return to work.

Work Hardening: A highly structured, goal-oriented, individualized intervention program designed to return the patient/client to work. Work hardening programs, which are multidisciplinary in nature, use real or simulated work activities designed to restore physical, behavioral and vocational functions. Work hardening addresses the issues of productivity, safety, physical tolerances, and worker behaviors.

Reference

American Physical Therapy Association. (2011) Orthopedic section guideline: Occupational health physical therapy: Advanced work rehabilitation guidelines. Retrieved from https://www.orthopt.org/uploads/content_files/OHSIG_Guidelines/Work_Rehab_Guideline_Final_Draft_4_1_11.pdf

What does an FCE entail?

Functional Capacity Evaluation (FCE): The therapist uses standardized and validated advanced testing in order to (a) determine safe job matches for return to work; (b) determine the level of reasonable accommodations necessary for reinstating an injured worker; and (c) make recommendations regarding future interventions.

How to I charge for an FCE?

FCE/Functional Capacity Assessment (FCA) billing is dependent on payer source. States may have specific codes that they use for compensation rating. The provider must check with their individual state Workers Compensation Insurance Rating Bureau. Health Maintenance Organizations (HMO) will not pay for FCE/FCA's as they don't see this service as medically necessary.

The CPT code 97750 (physical performance evaluation with report in 15 min increments) has been used for Federal Government FCA's.

How to charge for WH/WC?

Consider CPT code 97545

Is the time in writing the report billable?

Yes

How much training do I need? Are there courses available?

Length and time of training is dependent on the particular program chosen and who is providing the training. Suggested programs include but are not limited to;

- Work Well
- DSI Work Injury Solutions - 2 days
- OccuPro - 3 days
- Matheson - 4 days

Is there additional training/certifications necessary?

Consider attending courses that go into more detail concerning the following;

- Pre-Work Screening
- Job Function Analysis
- Job Function Matching
- Ergonomics

Performing Work Rehabilitation: What equipment do I need?

This is dependent on who is providing the training. Equipment that is needed should be functional and simulate real work tasks (crates, ladders, shelving, weights...). Companies whom the clinician may be doing the 'work rehabilitation' for may provide equipment and job simulation resources. Software may also be needed.

Performing Work Rehabilitation: What needs to be included in my reports?

The FCE report often includes a written and chart component. Both components of the report include a summary of the evaluation findings. The client's functional performance during testing can be outlined and described as it pertains to the level and frequency that a client can perform the task. If a job description has been provided, the findings of the evaluation may determine whether or not the client can safely perform the duties of the specific job and this is included in the report. Each individual company provides training and recommendations regarding the writ-eup of the FCE.

Additional Resources

AOTA

APTA

Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation

Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation

Rating and Statistical Bureaus

<https://www.irmi.com/free-resources/insurance-industry.../rating-statistical-bureaus>