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EMPLOYEE HEALTH TESTING EDITION



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*The annual listing of 10 companies
that are at the forefront of tackling
customer challenges*

At the Vanguard of Transformative Musculoskeletal (MSD) Injury Prevention



Karen Breckenridge,
President

Karen Breckenridge, President at ABILITYusa™, notes: “The single most important tool for comprehensive injury prevention, is Job Analysis based, physical function testing: Post-Offer/Pre-Placement, Fitness for Duty and Return to Work testing.” These testing strategies provide objective guidance to decision making which protect the employee and organization from Hire to Retire.” This is true for companies of all types, whether positions be heavy or light.

The imbalance in an employee’s physical abilities and the physical demands of a job lead to injuries and frequently repeat injuries. These inflict a high cost on businesses and unnecessary pain and suffering on the employee. Injuries increase lost days, employee turnover, lost productivity, increased direct and indirect costs, and a dozen other undesirable results. Reduced injuries over the years, however, translate to happier and healthier employees and a decreased Experience Modification Rate (X-MOD). A reduced X-MOD reduces workers’ compensation insurance premiums. Who does not appreciate a reduction in Insurance rates?

The ABILITYusa™ Regulatory compliant, functional testing is unlike other “employment physicals” and testing programs that may include a cursory look at the individual’s general health and fitness plus some simple lifting that, however, may be unrelated to specific components of essential tasks presenting risk. Testing incorporates a more comprehensive set of data collection points, such as current

Employers are seeking effective methods of preventing and reducing MSD injuries in light of the following facts: MSDs are the leading cause of pain, suffering, and disability in American workplaces. MSDs cause 1/3rd of all workplace injuries; DIRECT costs, on average, are \$42,000, with INDIRECT costs adding 1-5X more. These indirect costs are not covered by Workers’ Compensation insurance. On average, 10% of employees are responsible for 70-80 % of workplace injuries as they lack the ability to safely perform the physical demands of a particular position.

As a forerunner for the last 25 years in the employee health Musculoskeletal Injury Prevention landscape, ABILITYusa™, in conjunction with its certified and licensed providers, empowers businesses and employees to reduce injuries using multiple, time-tested, and proven strategies. MSD injury volumes can and are being decreased! The conceptual outline of these strategies includes: “Evaluation, Education/Training, and Empowerment for Early Intervention”. Preventing one injury saves untold thousands of dollars. Prevention costs are minuscule when compared to the unnecessary human and financial costs of even one musculoskeletal injury prevented.



musculoskeletal status and functional abilities, as well as task simulations that replicate the heights, distances, repetitions, and forces of actual physical demands learned through in-depth Job Analysis. Testing reports provide Pass or Fail results that address considerations of current abilities and buffers of strength needed for continued safety success in a given position. When relevant, reports have recommendations regarding further education/training, ergonomic considerations, or specific safety considerations for that individual.

Apart from Post-Offer testing, the Fitness-for-Duty and Return to Work tests determine the worker’s current abilities after an accident or illness absence. Ideally, individuals post-injury could continue on the job, as work is therapeutic. Temporary work modifications can be done progressively, objectively, and safely. Likewise, Return to Work testing provides objective knowledge of safe capabilities and enables clarity in decision-making for job alterations, accommodation considerations, and other HR decisions, temporary or permanent. Fitness-for-Duty and Return-to-Work testing increases worker longevity within the company.

First Symptom Safety Education and Ergonomic assessment and training consultations prevent first symptom progression to injury at the company workstation or in the worker’s home. Breckenridge asserts that when a business is committed to a safety culture, they see the value of using the program’s strategies for immediate first-symptom reporting for needed interventions. Professional observations, testing, education, and training can most often prevent progression to injury. Leaders and employees are empowered to take action and involve clinicians to implement needed interventions for maximizing comfort and safety.

“We don’t want to put our heads in the sand and ignore somebody’s symptoms. We emphasize giving them better training on how to do the job safely, helping them understand and use good body mechanics, neutral postures, safe work practices, and comfortable ways to approach a task,” says Brandi Dooley, Senior Injury Prevention Specialist of ABILITYusa™. Other testing services may include Respiratory function/Spirometry and Respirator Fit testing, Vision Screening, and Drug and Alcohol Testing.



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The ABILITYusa™ “3 Es of Injury Prevention” (Evaluation, Education, and Empowerment) strategy success has been demonstrated with significant decreases in Experience Modification Rates, thus lowering insurance premiums. One typical example of injury reduction outcome success was with a nursing facility caring for heavy, debilitated, and paralyzed patients.

Staff’s frequent and heavy tasks included helping with bed mobility, transfers in and out of bed to wheelchairs, and to and from bathroom and shower facilities. Prior to program implementation, injuries were a regular occurrence, experienced at very high numbers.

After Job Analysis based Evaluation, Education/Training, and Empowerment, that all changed. Knowing what a given employee’s physical abilities were through testing, guided task assignments, and subsequent education and training, empowered a cohesive safety culture that immediately reduced injuries. Further, addressing any symptoms immediately was another powerful strategy. Within two years, injuries were down to one to three injuries per year, which is unheard of in this industry. After approximately the fourth year, the Experience Modification ratings supported a decrease in insurance premiums.

Unsurprisingly, Employers, Candidates, and Employees consistently give positive feedback about their experiences and successes. Leveraging the expertise of its staff, certified providers, impactful testing programs, and years of experience, ABILITYusa continues to deliver goodwill and help employers better safeguard their employees from physical injuries through the “3 Es of Injury Prevention”. **IHR**