



Keeping You Up-to-Date with the Industrial Commission's Medical Services • Summer 2018

## FORMULATING FINAL OPINIONS

### Helpful Hints for Completing Your Report

The referral letter questions are very important to the legal community here at the Ohio Industrial Commission. Hearing officers utilize these answers as an integral part of their final decision making in regards to Permanent and Total Disability. The specialist must consider whether the Injured Worker is at maximal medical improvement, determine the combined whole person impairment percentage for the allowed condition(s) within their specialty, and discuss the Injured Worker's work capabilities/limitations stemming from the allowed conditions only. Below are helpful hints when formulating your opinions.

#### MUSCULOSKELETAL

- Expand the activities of daily living section in your report to obtain an idea of what the Injured Worker does day-to-day including self-care and hygiene, communication, physical activity, general hand function, travel, sexual function and sleep to develop your opinion on an impairment.
- Maintain consistency throughout the exam report with the ADLs section, physical examination, WPI calculations, and final opinion on the Injured Worker's ability to perform any type of remunerative work. See page 2 for common weight equivalents.
- Clearly separate the allowed conditions and their effect on the Injured Worker from the Injured Worker's non-allowed health conditions or allowed conditions assigned to other specialties.
- Remember that the work categories state a minimum and maximum lifting limit (up to). An Injured Worker could qualify for sedentary work with a further modification of lifting a negligible amount of force frequently but not a full 10 pounds occasionally due to the "and/or" aspect of the definition.
- Upgrade an Injured Worker's work category to the next level only if all of the criteria of the lower category on the assessment form have been met.
- Focus on mobility (pace and frequency), as well as weight limits when addressing an Injured Worker's work capabilities/limitations.
- Define limitations within a category to address specific body part issues such as "cannot lift overhead or use left arm" for shoulder ROM limitations. Part-time work is permitted and must be defined by hours per day and days per week.

#### MENTAL BEHAVIORAL

- Create an image of the Injured Worker's ability to function from hour to hour and day to day.
- Create a story that flows to a reasonable opinion and rationale consistent with the evaluation.
- Compose the report based on valued professional experience keeping impartiality as the guide rather than pre-conceived expectation of an Injured Worker's capacity to function and work. Ask yourself if you are being impartial.
- Summarize reports with the four functional areas of Activities of Daily Living, Social Functioning, Concentration and Adaptation.
- Avoid vague, ambiguous descriptions and focus on specific objective data and historical evidence that provide insight for the OAA. Examples of poor opinions are as follows:
  - "does not get along in public" (how, why, where?)
  - "cannot make complex decisions" (provide examples or refer to a page in the report)
- Provide greater specificity and examples for distractibility and motivation when referenced as part of the rationale for the final opinion. The court considers them ambiguous on their own.
- Avoid using pre-existing mental conditions or educational background as part of the final opinion. Also, avoid formulating a final opinion on pain complaints unless it is an allowed psychological condition. Instead, provide an appropriate rationale that focuses on the allowed mental health condition.

## Did You Know?

According to the *AMA Guides, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*, "an inclinometer is the preferred device for obtaining accurate, reproducible measurements in a simple, practical and inexpensive way (pg. 400)" for the spinal regions. Spinal motion is compound; therefore, it is important to use the dual-inclinometer technique when measuring spinal ROM during your OIC examinations. Established specific spinal region landmarks for this technique are referenced on pages 405 to 421 of the *AMA Guides, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Please document this method when performed in the examination section of your report.

# COMMON WEIGHT EQUIVALENTS

How much do household items weigh?

## SEDENTARY/LIGHT



Step Ladder, 5-10lbs



Gallon of milk, 8lbs



Canned Goods, 1-4lbs

### Light Items between 1-15lbs

ITEM	POUNDS
Box of salt	1.2
Liter of soda	2.2
Weed Trimmer	2.5
Large can of Crisco	3
Small tool box	3
Gallon of Ice Cream	4.4
Dry cleaning on hangers	2-5
6-pack of soda	4-6
Gallon of oil	7-9
Bag of groceries	5-10
Flour/Sugar	5-10
Bag of fruit	5-10
Bag of mulch/dirt	5-10
2x4 wood boards	8-10
Gallon of detergent	8-11

## MEDIUM



Watermelon, 20-25lbs

Full Laundry Basket,  
10-20lbs



Push Lawn Mower,  
30lbs

### Medium Items between 15-40lbs

ITEM	POUNDS
Empty propane tank	17
Frozen Turkey	10-20
Duffel bag with clothes	10-20
Play pen	10-20
Snow Blower	28
Push lawn mower	30
Full trash bag	35
Child car seat	20-35
Young Child	14-40
Bag of Kitty litter/food	20-40

## HEAVY

Full Luggage, 40-50lbs



### Heavy Items between 40-75lbs

ITEM	POUNDS
Large bag of dog food	40-50
Bag of softener salt	40-50
Metal dolly	65

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## CONTINUING EDUCATION QUESTIONS

1. Specialists must avoid considering non-allowed conditions in their final opinions.
  - a. True
  - b. False
2. When measuring spinal motion, the most accurate measurement tool is:
  - a. Goniometer
  - b. One Inclinometer
  - c. Two Inclinometers
  - d. Dynamometer
3. When addressing ADLs and work capabilities, one could link an Injured Worker's ability to lift a gallon of milk to:
  - a. Sedentary work category
  - b. Light work category
  - c. Medium work category
  - d. A and B
4. When an Injured Worker carries a full laundry basket, they are carrying approximately:
  - a. 5-10 pounds
  - b. 10-20 pounds
  - c. 20-30 pounds
  - d. 30-40 pounds

1. A 2. C 3. D 4. B

Answers: