



CIGNA MEDICAL COVERAGE POLICY

The following Coverage Policy applies to all health benefit plans administered by CIGNA Companies including plans formerly administered by Great-West Healthcare, which is now a part of CIGNA.

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Coverage Policy Number 0324

Subject **Work Hardening Programs**

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Hyperlink to Related Coverage Policies

Chiropractic Care
Occupational Therapy
Physical Therapy

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

Coverage Policies are intended to provide guidance in interpreting certain **standard** CIGNA HealthCare benefit plans. Please note, the terms of a customer's particular benefit plan document [Group Service Agreement (GSA), Evidence of Coverage, Certificate of Coverage, Summary Plan Description (SPD) or similar plan document] may differ significantly from the standard benefit plans upon which these Coverage Policies are based. For example, a customer's benefit plan document may contain a specific exclusion related to a topic addressed in a Coverage Policy. In the event of a conflict, a customer's benefit plan document **always supercedes** the information in the Coverage Policies. In the absence of a controlling federal or state coverage mandate, benefits are ultimately determined by the terms of the applicable benefit plan document. Coverage determinations in each specific instance require consideration of 1) the terms of the applicable benefit plan document in effect on the date of service; 2) any applicable laws/regulations; 3) any relevant collateral source materials including Coverage Policies and; 4) the specific facts of the particular situation. Coverage Policies relate exclusively to the administration of health benefit plans. Coverage Policies are not recommendations for treatment and should never be used as treatment guidelines. Proprietary information of CIGNA. Copyright ©2011 CIGNA

Coverage Policy

CIGNA does not cover work hardening programs under many benefit plans because they are considered training or vocational training in nature. Services that are training or vocational training in nature are excluded under many benefit plans. In addition, work hardening programs are specifically excluded under many benefit plans. Please refer to the applicable plan language to determine benefit coverage.

As the primary goal of work hardening programs is related to improving work function and abilities and not the treatment of a specific illness or injury, CIGNA does not cover work hardening programs, because they are considered not medically necessary.

General Background

Work hardening programs are also referred to as work conditioning programs, work rehabilitation, physical conditioning programs or functional restoration programs. The primary purpose of these programs is to improve work status and function, with the ultimate goal of returning an individual back to work. Treatment of the underlying medical condition is not the goal.

Work hardening programs were introduced in the late 1970s as a means of rehabilitating workers and returning them to productive work. A structured program of graded physical conditioning, strengthening exercise and functional tasks is used in conjunction with real or simulated job activities. In a supervised environment, the worker will learn appropriate job performance skills, in addition to improving his or her physical condition.

Occupational therapists and physical therapists are the principal providers for these programs. The program may be multidisciplinary, incorporating behavioral interventions. Traditionally, a work hardening program is initiated after the patient has completed a standard physical rehabilitation program and it appears that the patient has reached maximum medical improvement.

Professional Societies/Organizations

The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) defines work hardening as, "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." (APTA, 2009)

Summary

Therapeutic services that are related to specific employment opportunities, work skills or work settings are not medically necessary for the treatment of a medical condition. The primary goal of work hardening programs is improvement of work function and abilities, and not treatment of an illness or injury. Therefore, work hardening programs are considered not medically necessary.

Coding/Billing Information

Note: This list of codes may not be all-inclusive.

Not Medically Necessary/Not Covered:

CPT ^{®*} Codes	Description
97545	Work hardening/conditioning; initial 2 hours
97546	Work hardening/conditioning; each additional hour (list separately in addition to code for primary procedure)

ICD-9-CM Diagnosis Codes	Description
V57.22	Encounter for vocational therapy
	All other codes

*Current Procedural Terminology (CPT[®]) © 2010 American Medical Association: Chicago, IL.

References

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2. American Physical Therapy Association (APTA). Guidelines: Occupational Health Physical Therapy: Work Conditioning and Work Hardening Programs. Updated: 12/14/2009. Accessed February 15, 2011. available at URL address: http://www.apta.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Policies_and_Bylaws&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&CONTENTID=26229
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Policy History

Pre-Merger Organizations	Last Review Date	Policy Number	Title
CIGNA HealthCare	4/15/2007	0324	Work Hardening Programs

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