



COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOCUS GROUP

Understanding Psychological Claims in Workers' Compensation
Identifying Early Indicators and Interventions

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Guest Presenter(s):



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Objectives

- Equip districts to recognize early behavioral and performance signals.
- Position the interactive process as a practice and early intervention tool.
- Reduce psychological claim frequency, severity, and cost.



About link2MD

- Located in Roseville, CA, Link2MD is a recognized leading national telemedicine company focused on delivering high impact services for Occupational Medicine that are changing the industry. Link2MD delivers telemedicine services for many of the Nation's largest Employers, Insurance Companies, TPAs, JPAs, CA School Districts and Local and State Governments.

Our Solutions Accelerate Access to Care, Maximize Efficiencies, and Provide Better Clinical and Financial Outcomes

- **How do we accomplish this?**

- Timely, easy, and convenient access to medical care via secure online audio/video using a Smartphone, Tablet or PC.
- Services for initial injury and transfer of care cases - including psychiatry.
- Providers are designated as the Primary Treating Physician throughout the care process.
- Adhere to conservative treatment guidelines with a stay at work or early return-to-work focus.
- Automated processes to facilitate timely provider documentation, work status reports, request for authorizations and referrals.
- Medical coordinators provide oversight of the care continuum and claims process to mitigate delays in care and help close claims sooner.
- Less absenteeism, lost-time claims, travel, and transportation costs.
- Billing at State Approved Official Medical Fee Schedule – No additional costs.





Clinical Evaluation, Causation, Diagnosis, and Challenges

- Initial Evaluation of the Employee's Complaint and Perception of Work Environment
- Psychiatric History
- Establishment of a Diagnosis – Adjustment Disorder vs Acute Stress Disorder
- Treatment Options & Goals
- Work Status and Modified Duty
- Challenges and Impediments to Care





Clinical Evaluation

- Employee's presenting complaint
- Perception of the work environment
- Psychiatric and psychosocial history





Causation and Diagnosis

- Clinical assessment of causation
- Diagnostic framework
 - Adjustment Disorder
 - Acute Stress Disorder





Treatment, Work Integration, Challenges

- Treatment options and goals
- Work status recommendations
- Modified duty and stay-at-work strategies
- Challenges and Impediments to Care



Proactive Steps for Employers to Reduce Risk and Mitigate Claims Escalation

- An **early intervention** & tool for **mitigating risks**.
- Look for the **clues** in **behavioral & performance changes** long **before** a formal request happens.
- Common **employer missteps** - delay, drift, & over-reliance.
- **Reduce escalation & exposure** to psych claims by recognizing the **signs & early action**.

“When employers engage early, they shift from reacting to claims to preventing harm. The Interactive Process becomes a stabilizing tool, not a last resort.”





Early Signals That Should Trigger Action (Before a Claim Exists)

- Psych claims **don't happen overnight.**
- An **evolution** from unaddressed **stress**, role **strain**, **conflict**, or workload **imbalance.**
- The **signals** first emerge through **performance**, **attendance**, or **behavior changes.**
- **Your risk is not noticing. Your risk is not acting once noticed.**

Key message: Psych claims often follow missed warning signs, not sudden events.



The Interactive Process as Early Intervention, Not a Legal Afterthought

- **Early Warning Signs:**
 - **Withdrawal**
 - **Irritability**
 - **increased errors**
 - **Absenteeism**
 - **emotional reactivity**
 - **conflict escalation.**
- **Supervisors don't diagnose.** They are asked to **observe, document, and elevate concerns.**
- When **behavior changes**, the employer's **duty is to ask** about job **impact, not intent** or motivation.

Key message: The Interactive Process is a preventive tool, not just compliance.





What Employers Commonly Get Wrong—and the Cost of Delay

- **Common missteps:**
 - **waiting** for medical documentation
 - **defaulting** to discipline
 - **“monitoring”** without engagement.
- **Enforcement** increasingly treats **lack of follow-up** as a **breakdown of good-faith effort**.
- **Financial costs:** **claims, lost time, turnover, & litigation.**
- **Human costs:** **disengagement, worsening symptoms, & breakdown of trust.**

Key message: Delay, drift, and silence are now viewed as failures themselves.



Practical Accommodations That Reduce Risk and Support Stability

- **Temporary or flexible accommodations:** modified workload, schedule adjustments, reduced exposure to triggers, or check-in structures.
- Accommodations can be **time-limited and revisited**, especially with fluctuating mental health conditions.
- **Confidentiality** must be **preserved**, but **silence is not required**.
- **Act without over-disclosure. Confidentiality does not prevent action. Silence and inaction increase risk.**
- The **goal: continued engagement** at work, **not removal**.

Key message: Small adjustments made early often prevent larger disruptions later.





What to do to Protect the Organization Long-Term

- The Process: **not just paperwork. A structured conversation.**
- **Train supervisors on behavioral cues and escalation pathways.**
- **Establish clear IP guidelines** so managers **know what to do and when.**
- **Document consistently.** Dates, participants, options considered, and follow-up matter.
- An **early partnership** between **Risk Mgt, HR, and clinical partners** BEFORE a claim is filed.
- **Action** through systems, training, & follow-up **matter more than intent.**

Key message: Individual action is not enough. Systems prevent repeat risk.





Importance of Early Engagement

- **Early engagement ≠ not lower standards or accept claims.**
- **Timely, precise, & human.**
- **Focus: early response, documentation, & “Interactive” engagement.**
- **Proactive action stabilizes employees & protects the organization.**
- **Early intervention reduces psych claim risk while preserving dignity & performance.**



Wrap-Up & Discussion



- Key takeaways
- Resources
- Questions?

Future Topics 2026



- The Learning Institute: [Training Schedule](#)
- Next Quarterly Focus Group Meetings:
 - 05/13/2026 – Crisis Risk – Deadly Weapons

