

Fitness-for-Duty Examinations — Information for Supervisors

The fitness-for-duty examination is a medical assessment the results of which determine an employee's ability to perform the duties of the position.

General Policy

Management may request a fitness-for-duty examination and repeat examinations as necessary to safeguard the employee and coworkers. Specific reasons for the fitness-for-duty request must be stated by the requesting official.

Fitness-for-duty examinations must not interfere in any way with the employee's prescribed treatment regimen. The fact that an injured or ill employee is scheduled for a series of medical treatments or appointments with a medical provider does not, by itself, establish that the employee is not fit for duty.

Fitness-for-duty examinations are performed at the direction of the Postal Service at no cost to the employee. Payment includes reimbursement for any reasonable travel expenses incurred.

See *Employee and Labor Relations Manual* 864.3 and 547.3.

The Fitness-for-Duty Examination

Establishing Need for a Fitness-for-Duty Examination

The need for a fitness-for-duty examination is a serious matter and has health, safety, and labor relations ramifications. A fitness-for-duty examination should be scheduled when there is enough concern about an employee's ability to perform the duties of his or her position. Following are some of the reasons for which a fitness-for-duty examination may be performed:

- You, as the supervisor, indicate that there is a significant change or deterioration in the employee's performance or that the employee fails to maintain regular attendance. This evaluation, excludes consideration of absences covered by FMLA.
- The employee has sustained a job-related injury, and the injury compensation specialist determines the need for an independent medical evaluation.
- Postal Service or contract medical personnel identify a condition or behavior that should be medically evaluated.

Responding to Unusual Behavior

You, as a supervisor — through your experience, oversight, and proximity to the worksite — are usually the individual most aware of changes in employee behavior. The following changes may indicate a potential problem requiring a fitness-for-duty examination:

- Significant increase in unscheduled absences.
- Marked increase in unexplained lavatory usage.
- Changes in behavior and work performance after lavatory or lunch breaks.
- General changes in behavior toward fellow employees.
- Deterioration in personal hygiene and cleanliness of the work location.
- Inattention to work duties and progressive deterioration in concentration and memory.

If you note the above, you should consider approaching the employee privately, discussing the behavior change, and assuring the employee that the information discussed is confidential to the extent possible. It is recommended that this initial conversation be undocumented and that it include an offer of the services of the Postal Service Occupational Health or Employee Assistance Programs.

If the employee refuses to converse with you in this initial period, document the refusal and consider requesting that a formal fitness-for-duty examination be performed.

Requesting an Examination

Use Form 2492, *Request for Fitness-for-Duty Examination*, when requesting a fitness-for-duty examination. *In addition to the information requested in the form, submit a written narrative describing the reason for the request.* You may also wish to submit, as attachments, attendance logs or any other pertinent information.

Obtain concurrence for the request from the installation head or designee. The installation head forwards the request to the Human Resources manager for further processing.

The main reason for rejecting requests for fitness-for-duty examinations is inadequate supporting documentation.

Notifying the Employee of the Examination

The occupational health nurse administrator, or designee, notifies Labor Relations of the scheduled examination. Labor Relations notifies you in writing of the examination appointment. The employee is notified by mail and, if practicable, by personal delivery from you.

The letter to the employee should include information concerning the reasons for which the fitness-for-duty examination is necessary.

Emergency Fitness-for-Duty Examinations

Establishing Need for an Emergency Fitness-for-Duty Examination

Postal facilities are required to have 24-hours-a-day access to medical providers. In situations where an employee exhibits acute and unusual behavior that is disruptive and could result in injury to the employee or others, an immediate medical assessment, and possibly treatment, may be necessary.

Responding to Threatening Behavior

Examples of behavior that could result in an employee resorting to workplace violence include:

- Argumentative behavior toward fellow employees and/or supervisors.
- Unusual interest in news reports and literature relating to violence and violent acts.
- Involvement in altercations in the workplace.
- Employee statements that demonstrate there are specific plans being formulated by the employee meant to bring harm through violence.
- Indication that the employee is impaired possibly as a result of substance abuse.

You must immediately contact the postal facility manager on duty, advise him or her of the situation, and receive concurrence from that manager that an emergency fitness-for-duty examination is needed. The facility medical and/or supervisory personnel notify the contract medical provider and make appropriate arrangements for the transportation of the employee to the medical facility.

Examination Results

Reporting and Interpreting Results

The results of the fitness-for-duty examination are sent by the examining physician directly to the district occupational health nurse administrator. Management must be advised of the results of the examination as soon as possible. The postal physician or occupational health nurse administrator is responsible for interpreting the medical findings for management and, if necessary, for the employee.

Observing Confidentiality

The fitness-for-duty report may contain personal medical information that is not related to the employee's work capability and must *not* be released by the medical records custodian in its entirety unless specific management need-to-know conditions exist in accordance with MI EL-860-98-2, *Employee Medical Records*.