

Fitness for Duty

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When Is Fitness for Duty Testing Used?

Frequently a supervisor or other professional will refer a patient for a Fitness for Duty evaluation after a period of time when changes in functioning raise concern. A person may have gone through a medical or physical trauma of some sort, or because of a difficult to diagnose learning, emotional, or behavior problem. Threatening or potentially dangerous behavior is one example.

What Is Involved in Fitness for duty Testing?

Fitness for Duty assessments examine educational, vocational, medical, legal, sexual, financial, substance use, marital/relationship, parenting, and other potential arenas that might reveal potential for vocational dysfunction. Fitness for Duty evaluations are conducted employing interviews, test batteries, and treatment/rehabilitation planning. Supervisors, spouses, families, or significant others are frequently involved both in the evaluation and the treatment processes.

What Questions are Asked?

Aptitude/Intellect: What is the highest level of cognitive or intellectual achievement of which a person is capable? This might also be referred to as the person's innate brain capacity. These skills might represent the level of cognitive functioning which the person could achieve in the ideal environment, or in the setting which best brings out the skills with which the person was born. This portion of the test battery measures those skills which are likely to change less with time or with a modification in environment.

Academic Skills: What is the person's actual level of daily performance in practical problem solving and communication skills such as reading speed, reading accuracy, reading comprehension, writing ability, and mathematical computations? Are there signs of Learning Disability?

Learning and Memory Ability (Information Processing): How much new information, to which the person has not been previously exposed, can the person absorb and express? This aspect of a person's cognitive functioning is assessed through the visual/spatial as well as through the verbal/auditory modes. This portion of the test battery assesses a person's mode of learning. What is the person's learning style? Does the person learn in

discreet steps or details, or through the big picture? The test battery can uncover whether a person's learning and memory problems are the result of underlying disorders such as Learning Disability.

Attention/Concentration: How accurately can a person attend for long periods of time to information being presented through the visual or the auditory modes? Is the person distractible by external or internal stimuli? Testing related to attention/concentration also uncovers whether a person's difficulty in this area might be related to a medical condition such as Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD or ADHD).

Executive Skills: What is the person's level of skill in more complex cognitive functioning such as abstraction, generalization, benefiting by feedback from the environment, mental flexibility, multitasking, planning ahead, simple and complex problem solving, and persevering with a task until it is finished?

Personality/Emotional Functioning: What is the person's level of coping skills, self-esteem, social skills, mood and affect level, and capacity for behavior control? Are there any underlying personality and emotional difficulties which require treatment?

Career Potential: For what do the person's vocational interests and skills best suit them? Given the person's level of cognitive ability and past experiences, combined with their current interests, what are the general and specific vocational fields in which they would be most likely to succeed and gain satisfaction?

Sensory, Motor, and Sensory-Motor Skills: Difficulties coordinating vision, hearing, tactile, as well as the general body senses, with one's motor activities might require specific examination. Such an evaluation could help detect Sensory Integration Disorder in children, or fine and gross motor difficulties at any age.

Rule Out Organic Dysfunction: In cases where a person may have had an illness or injury which affects the brain, Fitness for Duty measures the extent to which vocational performance has been affected by this difficulty. Therefore, a Fitness for Duty evaluation might assess the effects of brain injury or disorder..