

The Importance of Pre-Employment Medicals

Recruitment can be a costly and resource hungry exercise, however if we don't get it right and protect our business and employees by implementing pre-employment medicals in our recruitment processes it will often cost us more than what we bargained for.

Pre-employment medicals provide you with a base line benchmark understanding of potential applicants' medical status for items such as: hearing, eyesight, lung functions and general fitness, in order to ascertain if they are medically fit and capable to carry out the tasks that the position you are hiring for requires of them.



This information is vital to ensuring you are not setting someone to fail in a position by employing someone who has a tiny frame with little strength and into a position that consists of heavy manually handling all day long. If you were to do this, it would only be a matter of time before you have manual handling injuries such as sprains or strains and back injuries which would lead to workers compensation claims.

If you currently do not have pre-employment medicals as part of your new entrant process, or even if do, below are some tips on what to look out for and how to ensure you are doing it legally. Having pre-employment medicals in place sends a strong message to applying candidates that you are serious about their health.

1. Pre-employment medicals should be a part of all business recruitment process, however they should never be the single indicator of why an individual is not successful in a position.
2. Ensure your pre-employment medicals policies and procedures are in line with the AS4811-2006 Employment Screening.
3. Ensure your pre-employment medicals policies and procedures are non-discriminative.
4. Ensure that you screen for health issues that are relevant and exclusive to the tasks and duties being asked to perform, and to conditions that they may be getting exposed to. i.e. if hearing protection is required to be used in the position, it would pay to have a hearing test that includes the frequencies of industrial deafness as part of the pre-employment medical in order to give you a benchmark for any future claims of loss of hearing.
5. If you include a drug and alcohol test as part of your pre-employment medical, ensure your company policies are clear about why you do this testing, how the tests will be carried out, the chain of custody of the results and what are, if any, levels or tolerances that are accepted.
6. Include a functional capacity screening where high levels of physical activity is involved and required in the position. Research has proven that screened employees have a less injury rate than those not screened, and functional capacity screening has lowered the severity of workplace related back strains and other workers compensation costs (*Nassau, 1999*).
7. Ensure all medical reports are checked to ensure the "Is Medically Fit" box is ticked.
8. Some industries and positions require an annual medical screening to ensure employees are medically fit. For example, truck drivers over 50 years of age.

I hope this article has encouraged you to either commence pre-employment medical screening in your organisation or at least improved your current practice. Remember, all medical reports and records pertaining to personal medicals outcomes must be kept confidential.