

## *Employer Validation of Acceptable Absenteeism Rates in Forensic and Social Security Venues*

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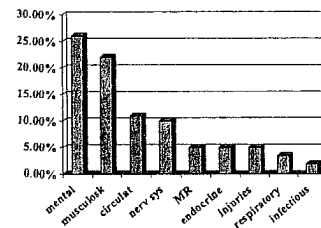
## *Session Objectives*

- Review demographic statistics regarding absenteeism and etiology in the US
- Explore available literature re: absenteeism
- Nature and design of our study and survey
- Data collection
- Results
- Conclusions and discussion

## *Demographic Stats and Etiology - SSA*

- 2009 SSA stats show over 51 million beneficiaries of which 7.6 million were injured workers
- Approx 2 million SSDI applicants a year with almost one million being awarded benefits (over 971,000 in 2009) (Turpin, 2010)
- Chronic pain treatment and lost work productivity cost over \$125 billion in 2007 (Arnoff, 1998)
- Chronic pain accounts for 60% of all work illness with musculoskeletal diagnoses 2<sup>nd</sup> only to mental illness excluding persons with mental retardation

## *SSA beneficiaries by category in 2007*



## *Demographic Stats and Etiology - SSA*

- Those with mental disorders were most highly found in the 30-39 age range (38.7%), then under age 30 (38.3%)
- Musculoskeletal disorders were reported highest among 60-64 y/o (30.6%)
- Circulatory disorders were reported highest for 60-64 y/o as well (20.9%)
- overall, mental disorders increasingly cited for younger individuals as major cause of inability to work
- interestingly, mental disorders was lowest for 60-64 y/o

## *Demographic Stats and Etiology - WCB*

- In WCB cases, musculoskeletal injuries and chronic pain account for 60% of claims
- Low back injury pain generally accounts for 80% - 90% of all WC costs annually (Hashemi et al., 1997)
- Over 80% of all physician visits and lost work/absenteeism is attributed to stress

### *Absenteeism Literature*

- Not a great deal out there since individual employers keep these numbers and don't generally share publicly
- DOL in 2008 indicated 3.7 million nonfatal musculoskeletal work injuries of which over one million were off work for an average of 10 days; 2 days longer than the overall median for all diagnosed missed days

### *Absenteeism Literature*

- FMLA (1993) - covered employers must grant an eligible employee up to 12 work weeks (60 days) of unpaid leave during any 12-month period for a serious health condition. This law states that employees must give 30 days notice of the need for leave, provided it is foreseeable. If the injury or illness is unexpected then the employee should provide as much notice as possible. The law does not account for monthly periodic days specifically. Law also only applies to businesses with 50+ workers.

### *Center for Disease Control statistics*

- Americans feel physically or mentally unhealthily approximately 6 days per month
- We feel healthy/energetic about 19 days per month
- about 1/3 report mental or emotional problems per month and 18-24 y/o the highest
- Older adults report most physical limitations and physical poor health
- Adults with lower education and lower income report more unhealthy days
- People with cardiovascular conditions and diabetes reported twice as many unhealthy days as those without

### *Nature and Design of the Current Study*

- VEs are often asked during SSA hearings by reps - "How many days of the month can an employee miss without being terminated?"
- Some Reps make up RFCs that incorporate that question
- We surveyed over 1,000 employers for info re: absentee rates for 20 job titles with 1,286 responses

*(SGA for 2010 is \$1,000 mth non-blind and \$1,640 a month for persons who are blind. - e.g. - \$7.25 hr X 32 hrs a week X 52 weeks = \$12,064)*

### *Job titles*

1. Cashier - convenience or grocery store
2. Greeter - grocery store
3. Security Guard - grocery store
4. Food Sorter - produce company
5. Cashier - movie theater
6. Front Desk Clerk - Hotel
7. Telemarketer - various settings

### *Job titles*

8. Hotel Maid
9. Hotel Janitor
10. Retail Sales Clerk - department stores
11. Assembly workers - various settings
12. Waitress - restaurants
13. Janitor - public schools
14. Rental car drivers

*Job titles*

- 15. Stock clerk – grocery store
- 16. Usher – movie theater
- 17. Busboy – restaurant
- 18. Cashier - restaurant
- 19. Janitor – grocery store
- 20. School Cafeteria Attendants - school

*Survey Questions*

- 1. Does your business offer employees who work as a XXXX, a specific # of sick days per month?
- 2. (if applicable) How many paid sick days do your XXXX get per year?
- 3. (if applicable) Can an employee take unpaid additional days off per year?
- 4. Is there a written company policy that indicates the maximum number of sick days an employee can take off each year before being terminated?
- 5. If an employee is out ½ a day, does that count for 1 day?
- 6. If an employee consistently calls in sick every month, how many days could they be out without getting fired?

*Demo Info – top 10 and bottom participants*

<p><u>Top 10</u></p> <p>Alabama (50)          Arizona (48)          California (47)          Texas (47)          Arkansas (41)          Colorado (38)          Florida (38)          Connecticut (38)          Georgia (34)          Idaho (34)</p>	<p><u>Bottom 10</u></p> <p>Massachusetts (9)          Hawaii (11)          Oklahoma (11)          Vermont (13)          West Virginia (16)          North Carolina (17)          Alaska (18)          Ohio (18)          Virginia (18)          Maryland (19)</p>
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*Demo Info – top and bottom job title #s*

<p><u>Top</u></p> <p>Cashier- grocery or convenience (18.5%, n=233)          Stock clerk – grocery (9.6%, n=120)          Busboy – (9.1%, n=115)          Food Sorters – (8.9%, n=112)          Retail Sales Clerk (8.9%, n=112)          Waiter/ress (7.2%, n=92)          Cashier – movie theater (6.7%, n=85)          Telemarketer (5.2%, n=66)          Janitor School (5%, n=63)          Usher – movie theater (4.3%, n=55)          Car Rental Drivers (3.9%, n=50)30          School Cafeteria Attend (3.6%, n=46)</p>	<p><u>Bottom</u></p> <p>Janitor - grocer (.2%, n=3)          Cashier - restaurant (.2%)          Assembly workers (.3%, n=4)          Hotel desk clerk (.5%, n=7)          Guard – grocer (1.6%, n=21)          Greeter (1.9%, n=25)          Maid – hotel (2%, n=27)          Janitor –hotel (2.2%, n=30)</p>
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*RQ#1 – Does your business offer employees who work as XXXX a specific # paid sick days a year*

Yes – n =370 or 28.8%

No – n =911 or 70.8%

*Employees in these jobs need at least 32 hours/week (4 full days) at \$7.25 for SGA but may not be hired full time and do not get health insurance coverage. Fair Labor Standards Act doesn't classify full vs part time work, but leaves it up to individual employers.*

*RQ#2 – If paid sick days are offered, how many do XXXX receive a year? N= 341; 26%*

<u># of days</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
1	1	.3
2	2	.6
3	15	4.4
4	31	9.1
5	240	70.4
6	26	7.7
7	25	7.4
8	2	.6

RQ#3 – Can XXXX take unpaid sick days after using paid sick days? N=210; 16.2%

# of days	n	%
1	1	.5
5	1	.5
8	1	.5
14	72	34.3
21	8	3.8
24	4	1.9
28	37	17.6
42	76	36.2
56	10	4.8

RQ#4 – Is there a written policy that indicates the max # of sick days an employee can take each year before being terminated?

Yes – n=39 or 3%

No – n=837 or 65.1%

Don't know – n=410 or 31.9%

RQ#5 – If an employee is out 1/2 a day, does that count for 1 day?

Don't know – n=97 or 7.5%

Yes – n=116 or 9%

No – n=1,073 or 83.4%

RQ#6 - If an employee consistently calls in sick every month, how many days could they be out without getting fired? N=1,071 or 83.3%

# of days	n	%
1	75	7.0
2	372	34.7
3	518	48.4
4	53	4.9
5	44	4.1
6	5	.5
7	2	.2
d/k?	215	16.7

# of Days Per Month by Job Title – Cashiers grocery or convenience store -- n=233 (18.5%)

# of days	n	%
don't know	49	21
1	12	5.1
2	68	29.2
3	90	38.6
4	8	3.4
5	5	2.1

Don't know = d/k

# Days Per Mth by Job Title – Stock Clerk -- n=120 (9.54%)

# of days	n	%
d/k	5	4.1
1	10	8.3
2	28	23.3
3	61	50.8
4	6	5.0
5	8	6.6

# Days Per Mth by Job Title – Busboy -- n=114  
(8.8%)

# of days	n	%
d/k	9	6.1
1	5	4.3
2	36	31.3
3	60	52.2
4	2	1.7
5	5	4.3

# Days Per Mth by Job Title – Retail Sales Clerk --  
n=112 (8.9%)

# of days	n	%
d/k	4	3.5
1	14	12.5
2	50	44.6
3	33	29.5
4	8	7.1

# Days Per Mth by Job Title – Food Sorter -- n=109  
(8.2%)

# of days	n	%
d/k	6	5.4
1	1	.8
2	19	17.0
3	64	57.1
4	8	7.1
5	11	9.8

# Days Per Mth by Job Title – Waitress -- n=92  
(7.31%)

# of days	n	%
d/k	20	21.7
1	10	10.9
2	49	53.3
3	12	13.0

# Days Per Mth by Job Title – Cashier movie theater  
n=85 (6.75%)

# of days	n	%
d/k	56	65.9
2	12	14.1
3	13	15.3
4	2	2.3
5	2	2.3

# Days Per Mth by Job Title – Telemarketer n=66  
(5.24%)

# of days	n	%
d/k	4	6.1
1	2	3.0
2	16	24.2
3	39	59.0
5	3	4.5

# Days Per Mth by Job Title – School Janitor n=63  
(5.01%)

# of days	n	%
1	3	4.8
2	12	19.1
3	40	63.5
4	4	6.3
5	3	4.8

# Days Per Mth by Job Title – Usher theater n=55  
(4.37%)

# of days	n	%
d/k	31	56.3
2	12	21.8
3	10	18.2

# Days Per Mth by Job Title – Rental Car Driver  
n=50 (3.9%)

# of days	n	%
d/k	4	8.0
1	4	8.0
2	22	44.0
3	15	30.0
4	5	10.0

# Days Per Mth by Job Title – School Cafeteria  
Attendant -- n=46 (3.65%)

# of days	n	%
2	13	28.3
3	27	58.7
4	2	4.3
5	3	6.5

# Days Per Mth by Job Title – Hotel Janitor -- n=30  
(2.38%)

# of days	n	%
d/k	9	30.0
2	4	13.3
3	13	43.3
4	3	10.0

# Days Per Mth by Job Title – Hotel Maid -- n=27  
(2.14%)

# of days	n	%
d/k	9	33.3
3	12	44.4
4	4	14.8

*# Days Per Mth by Job Title – Security Guard- n=20  
(1.59%)*

<u># of days</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
2	7	35.0
3	11	55.0

*# Days Per Mth by Job Title – Hotel Desk Clerk -  
n=7 (.5%)*

<u># of days</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
d/k	3	42.0
2	2	28.6
3	2	28.6

*Job Title High Totals for 2 vs 3 Days Off Per Month*

	<u># of days</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
Cashier groc/conven	3	90/233	38.6
Stock clerk	3	61/120	50.8
Busboy	3	60/114	52.2
Retail Sales clerk	2	50/112	44.6
Food sorter	3	64/109	57.1
Waiter/ress	2	49/92	53.3
Cashier movies		d/k	65.9
Telemarketer	3	39/66	59.0

*Job Title High Totals for 2 vs 3 Days Off Per Month*

	<u># of days</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
School janitor	3	40/63	60.5
Usher theater	d/k	31/55	56.3
Rental car driver	2	22/50	44.0
School Cafeteria Attend	3	27/46	58.7
Hotel janitor	3	13/30	43.3
Hotel Maid	3	12/27	44.4
Security Guard	3	11/20	55.0
Hotel desk clerk	d/k	3/7	42.0

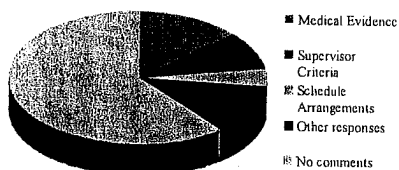
## Data Collection Issues

- Being a female with a Hispanic surname demonstrated to be an issue at times, so my name was “modified” according to geographical region
- Participation was difficult to obtain at times
- Some individuals were not “well-versed” in company policy

## Common Themes in Content Analysis

- Write-ups may lead to termination
- Worker is paid for hours worked
- “Excused” absences are allowable
- Calling-in sick consistently is not allowable
- Doesn’t matter so long as sick employee gets someone to cover their shift – only get paid for hours worked

## Absenteeism Procedures



## Qualitative Responses to Consistently Missing Work Each Month

1. Will require medical evidence (n=173)
2. Supervisor discretion (n=120)
3. We'll work to accommodate employee (n=54)
  - Severity of the illness?
  - Depends on employee's tenure with company?

### Summary findings and conclusions - Job Title Most Frequent Tolerable Missed Days per Month

Job title	most frequent # of days	%
Cashier	3	38.6
Stock Clerk	3	50.8
Busboy	3	52.2
Retail Sales Clerk	2	44.6
Food Sorter	3	57.1
Waitress	2	53.3
Cashier-movies	d/k	65.9
Telemarketer	3	59.0

### Summary findings and conclusions - Job Title Most Frequent Tolerable Missed Days per Month

Job title	most frequent # of days	%
School Janitor	3	63.5
Usher - movies	d/k	56.3
Rental Car Driver	2	44.0
School Café Attend	3	58.7
Janitor - hotel	3	43.3
Maid - hotel	3	44.4
Security Guard	3	55.0
Desk Clerk hotel	d/k	42.0

### Summary findings and conclusions

- *My testimony will change with caveat....*
  - Based on single study and may not generalize to all employers
  - Many employers do not have written policies re: monthly absences; up to how much supervisor likes the employee
  - Three days per month much more commonly endorsed in study
  - Most of these jobs do not offer sick benefits and pay employee by the hour so just as long as they get someone to cover and supervisor is ok with it

## Questions / Comments?

THANK YOU

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