

MTA Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA) Screening and Referral Program

The MTA's Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA) screening program is one element in an overall effort to ensure operational safety and improve health and wellness among MTA employees. Alertness, along with healthy sleep management, is a major factor in our wellbeing and contributes to safety in the workplace. This document describes the process and protocols in place for addressing sleep disorders, in particular, Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA).

Screening of safety sensitive employees such as locomotive engineers and conductors has been strongly recommended by the National Transportation Safety Board and the Federal Railroad Administration. To facilitate this OSA screening program, the MTA has contracted with multiple vendors to assist employees in the diagnosis and treatment of OSA.

Initially, employees who are directly involved in train or bus movement will be screened for OSA risk factors. The screenings will eventually be expanded to include employees who operate heavy machinery or company vehicles, where there may be an impact on public safety. These screenings will be conducted by Occupational Health Services (OHS) physicians during their periodic medical evaluations, or when an employee comes for a revisit for conditions such as hypertension or diabetes, or during a Return to Work examination.

As the program develops and our overall wellness efforts evolve, additional employees will also be required to undergo this screening and possible testing and treatment for OSA.

Employment applicants for those safety sensitive titles who require pre-placement medical evaluations will also have to qualify using the same screening and compliance criteria.

Any employee having concerns for their own safety and wellness may voluntarily be screened for OSA risk factors through their personal physician and a referral to a sleep specialist or one of the all-agency contracts.

The key to a successful program requires honesty and mutual trust between the employee and employer. It is critical to identify as quickly as possible, those with obstructive sleep apnea and get them the treatment they need in order to support and sustain a healthy lifestyle.

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Screening

The following criteria/risk factors in conjunction with sound medical judgement will be utilized to refer employees for testing and evaluation:

The screening criteria are based on reviews of other Industry criteria and medical expert guidance. Parameters considered during this screening will be a review of medical history, results of a screening questionnaire and other physical criteria described below.

Screening Questionnaire

- Enhanced health questionnaire will include questions on inappropriate sleepiness during the day (or work shift), history of any motor vehicle crashes or near misses due to drowsiness AND
- Epworth Sleepiness Scale, a frequently used and well validated questionnaire. A score of 11 or greater would warrant additional evaluation
- The enhanced questionnaire is very similar to one currently used by the Metro-North Railroad program to screen their Locomotive Engineers

Physical criteria

- BMI>35 and neck circumference >17" for men or 16" for women OR
- BMI>35 OR neck circumference >17" for men or 16" for women plus any of the following:
 - Loud snoring
 - Observed apneas
 - Diagnosed hypertension requiring medication
 - Diagnosed diabetes or glucose intolerance

Referral Process

- I. If an OHS representative, in their medical judgement, deems an employee is at risk for OSA, the employee will be referred to a MTA Sleep Medicine vendor for a take-home and/or laboratory sleep test. Before leaving OHS, the employee will receive a packet of material explaining the program and their responsibilities for testing and follow-up with a sleep physician; and the employee will fill out and sign any necessary forms and HIPAA releases.
- II. OHS will provide a referral and relevant medical history to the vendor after the employee has been referred. All efforts will be made to schedule an employee with a vendor that serves their home or work location.

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- III. The employee will communicate with the vendor by telephone or e-mail within 48 hours of the referral by OHS.
- IV. The employee has the responsibility to (1) take the sleep test on the date established, usually the night before a relief day or scheduled day off, (2) if given a home test, return the testing equipment to the vendor within 48 hours of taking the test using the provided packaging, and (3) scheduling and attending the appointment with the sleep specialist.
- V. Any follow up visits would require the employee using his/her own sick leave time.
- VI. An employee who is prescribed OSA therapy, will contact the vendor within 48 hours after the date of the appointment with the sleep specialist to begin the process of ordering any needed medical equipment, scheduling an appointment for fitting, etc., and/or keeping the vendor up-to-date concerning the next steps in his/her treatment.
- VII. Durable Medical Equipment (DME) – replacement parts (e.g. tubing, filters, masks) for Positive Airway Pressure machines are available via prescription from the treating sleep specialist and through employee health insurance plans.

Medical Clearance and Compliance Monitoring

- Any safety-sensitive employee who is determined by OHS to need further evaluation must bring the results of the sleep specialist evaluation including test results and any treatment recommendations. In general, employees will be allowed to work during the evaluation process and given 90 days after diagnosis to provide satisfactory documentation of treatment compliance. However, applicants will need to demonstrate compliance before being hired.
- An employee in a safety-sensitive title with diagnosed moderate or severe OSA is required to show acceptable levels of compliance with the treatment recommended by their sleep specialist. There must be documented efficacy of the recommended method of treatment.
- Those using devices such as CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) must provide reports of satisfactory compliance with use for at least 30 days. The revisits to monitor continued compliance are scheduled at least every six months.
- Employees with moderate or severe OSA who do not demonstrate satisfactory compliance with treatment within 90 days of diagnosis are restricted from performance of safety-sensitive duties.