BIFMA testing

The standard North American test for furniture that is intended for use in healthcare institutions is BIFMA 5.4X-2012. This test employs many different procedures to various parts of the chair, including the back, arms, and seat. Typical test loads are applied dynamically, that is, a weight is dropped on the chair from 3 – 6", rather than as a static load, which simply means a dead weight is placed on the chair. A chair can ultimately withstand a higher static load compared to one that is dropped.

However, many users just want to know "will this chair hold a 600lb. person". Test agencies don't make it simple for manufacturers to answer this question. That is because test procedures are intended to duplicate the actions of a person sitting in the chair. People often "drop" into a chair. Therefore, two of the most relevant tests are a drop test (as already described) or a seating durability test, whereby the chair is subjected to repetitive loads.

Some manufacturers choose to express the weight capacity of their chairs by using simple statements:

"Withstand static loads of 700 and 1000 lbs."
"Accommodates a 550 lb. weight capacity"
"Rated for 500lbs."

However, these statements are often subject to interpretation. Does it mean the way a person "drops" down in a chair? Was it tested with a static or dynamic load? What does it mean by "rated," as there are no certifications for bariatric furniture. Higher weight claims made outside of the test standards need to be described so users precisely understand them, and follow the same methodology employed by the test standard. Unfortunately, this seems to be a challenge for many manufacturers.

Stance Healthcare follows the BIFMA 5.4X-2012 testing using dynamic weight loads. Our testing is reflected on our website and in our marketing material with the following statement: Exceeds BIFMA Seating Durability test to XXX lbs.