

# Managing Psychological Injuries at Work

# Topics for Today

- The changing nature of injuries
- Building a successful “big picture” Return-to-Work plan
- What are the costs?
- Additional Resources

# The Changing Nature of Injuries

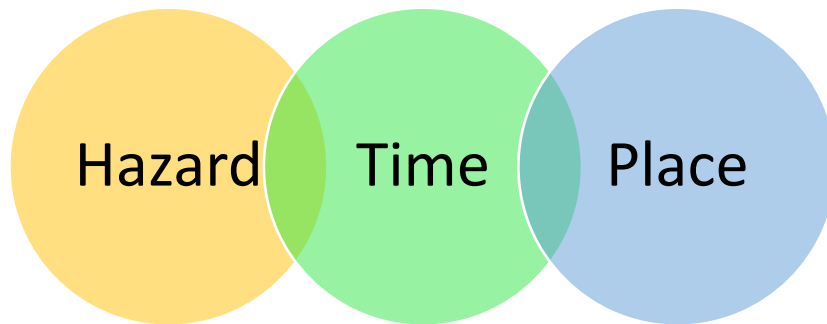


# What is a psychological injury?

- Includes **cognitive, emotional and behavioral symptoms that interfere with one's life** and can significantly affect their daily living
- Refers to a wide range of mental health conditions, such as depressive or anxiety disorders, adjustment disorders, acute stress disorders, and PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder)
- Can be primary/pure, or can be secondary to a physical injury

# When is a psychological injury compensable?

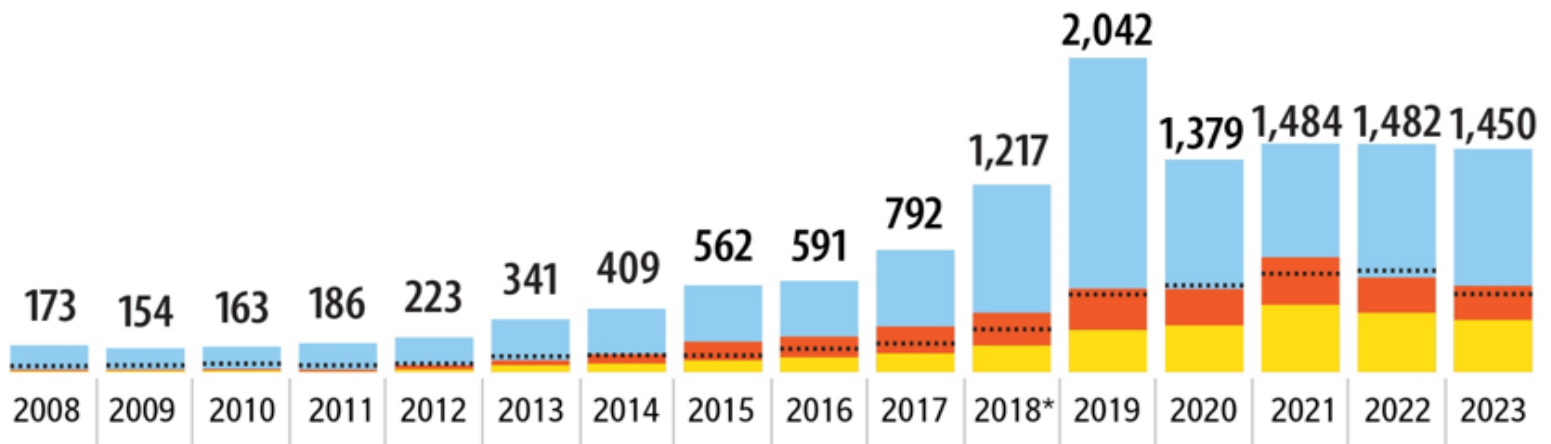
- There is a confirmed diagnosis as per the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)
- Work-relatedness is confirmed (Policy 02-01)



- The circumstances must also meet the criteria under the Traumatic or Chronic Onset Policies (Policy 03-01)

# Psychological Claim Volumes

- All other psych claims
- ..... PTSD (all)
- Non-PTSD, first responders
- PTSD, first responders



\* First responders include correction officers from 2018 onwards

# How does complexity impact time loss from work?

- Our mental and physical health are deeply connected
- Even when a claim is submitted for physical injuries, we need to consider the whole person (and vice versa)
- Psychological injuries and psychosocial barriers present unique challenges on the path to recovery and return to work

# Achieving an Early Return to Work



# Before an injury occurs...

- As an employer/leader, how can you ensure the atmosphere of your workplace is not a barrier to reporting, or return to work?
- Does your workplace acknowledge psychological health and safety, hazards, challenges, etc?
- What does connection look like for your staff?
  - How might this vary between employers? In-person vs. virtual?

# Before an injury occurs...

Consider the 13 factors of psychological health and safety in the workplace offered by Guarding Minds. These are:

1. Organizational Culture
2. Psychological and Social Support
3. Clear Leadership & Expectations
4. Civility & Respect
5. Psychological Demands
6. Growth & Development
7. Recognition & Reward
8. Involvement & Influence
9. Workload Management
10. Engagement
11. Balance
12. Psychological Protection
13. Protection of Physical Safety

**13 FACTORS**  
**Guarding Minds @ Work**

# Once the Injury Occurs

- First Aid on site and transportation to medical treatment as required
- Critical incident response - debriefing and assessment (if appropriate)
- Report to WCB

How you respond following an injury or event will build on the foundation of a successful return to work.

# Once the Injury Occurs

- When an injury occurs, how might you support your worker?
- Provide necessary information to WCB and be an active part of the care plan process
- Guard against stigma – set the tone!

# Moving Forward

The best outcomes involve managed, sensitive and supportive re-integration back into the workplace.

Modified duties are a crucial part of that process; where possible we encourage **pre-negotiated duties** to set a supportive tone and open the conversation with the worker and their treatment provider(s).

Studies show proactive intervention and earlier return to work lead to better outcomes.

# Psychological Injury Modified Duty Considerations

- Change in work tasks
- Change in work location
- Change in leadership/co-workers
- Change in hours/days of work
- Remove specific items/objects/equipment
- Any combination of the above

# Return to Work Scenarios

Worker is an employee in a liquor store.

Her claim is accepted for an acute stress disorder after she is working alone at night and is robbed at gunpoint.

- As the employer, what sort of duties might be suitable if you hadn't yet received medical reporting but wanted to create a **pre-negotiated** modified work offer?

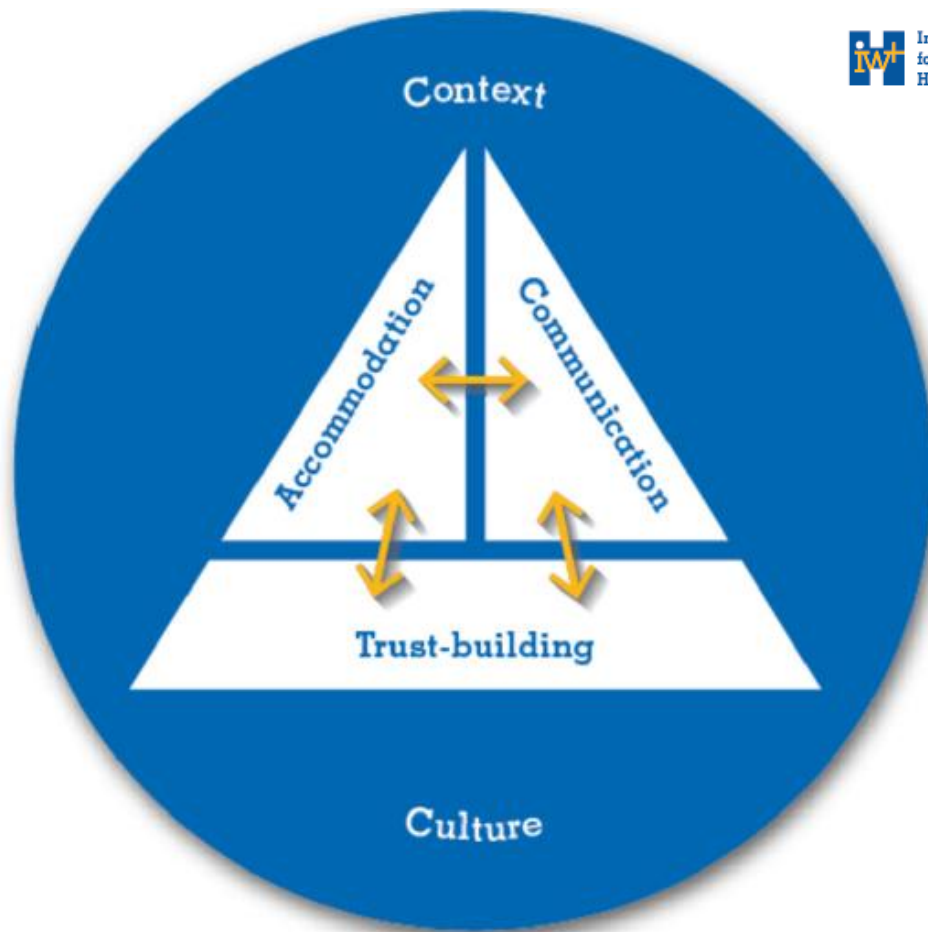
# Return to Work Scenarios

Worker is a utility worker and gets cornered against a fence by a dog. After several minutes the dog bites and seriously injures his right lower leg.

Initial restrictions include limited standing and walking (10-minute max), limited stairs/climbing, and no driving. What sort of modified duties might you provide?

After several weeks of physical recovery, he is cleared for increased standing and walking (4 hours per day) and can drive. Unfortunately, he has since been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder and is restricted from working in situations where there is any risk of encountering a dog. How might you adapt your modified work plan?

# The Big Picture: Bringing it all together



Studies such as this one from the Institute for Work & Health have uncovered evidence that successful, sustainable return to work plans are grounded in flexible accommodation processes, respectful, genuine communication, and workplace trust.

# How is WCB adapting our support?

At WCB we are working hard to meet changing worker and employer needs. Here are a few examples:

- Expanding our provider network
- A new provider contract effective Jan 1/25 with increased focus on return to work, collaboration, and accountability
- Provider learning events
- Introduction of a Cognitive Psychosocial Job Demands Analysis

# Cognitive Psychosocial Job Demands Analysis

- Outlines the cognitive, psychological and social components of a worker's role with your organization.
- Offers insight into how a worker's abilities and barriers may impact their well-being, safety and capacity to work.
- Provides a foundation for treatment providers, workers and employers to develop the best possible return-to-work plan.

[CPJDA \(C1447\)](#)

[CPJDA Cover Sheet \(1447A\)](#)

[Combined PDA and CPJDA Cover Sheet \(C1489\)](#)

# Comprehensive Psychosocial Job Demands Analysis

Tasks	Job Demand Intensity	Job Demand Frequency	Comments (brief description of job tasks)
<p><b>Short term memory and recall</b> The ability to recall and retrieve, on demand, information that has been previously learned.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Not Required</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Low Demand</b> – Minimal need to remember and recall information that is applied to work tasks and/or there are clear processes/instructions available to carry out work tasks.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Moderate Demand</b> – Recall information that is harder to remember because it is not often used or there are time constraints within which to recall the information.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>High Demand</b> – Recall many different pieces of detailed information and/or sequences which may have to be recalled in demanding situations (e.g. tight timeline pressures or being out of control).</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Not Required</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Rare</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Occasional</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Frequent</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Constant</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not Daily</p>	

An example section of the form, which includes additional categories such as mental endurance, problem solving, supervision of others, exposure to emotional situations, and so on.

# Employer Supports: Cognitive Psychosocial Job Demands Analysis

We know completing a CPJDA may be a new experience for some of our employers. If you are looking for extra help, here are some great resources to support you:

- [CPJDA Employer Fact Sheet](#)
- [Draft Example of a Completed CPJDA](#) (transit operator)
- [Online Workshop](#) (half day, online)

You can also chat with your WCB claim owner for added context and information.



# What is the Cost?

# Looking at the bigger picture

- Number one cause of disability in Canada.
- Mental health problems among working Canadians costs employers ~\$6B a year in lost productivity
- 47% of working Canadians consider their work to be the most stressful part of daily life.
- Psychological health problems affect mid-career workers most, lowering the productivity of the Canadian workforce.
- *Only 23% of Canadian workers feel comfortable talking to their employer about a psychological health issue.*

# People are your greatest asset

Early signs that someone is struggling:

- Withdrawal or deteriorating work performances
- Irritability, impatience, sadness
- Change in appearance – weight loss or gain, decrease in hygiene
- Forgetfulness
- Substance use
- Risk taking

# Other Resources

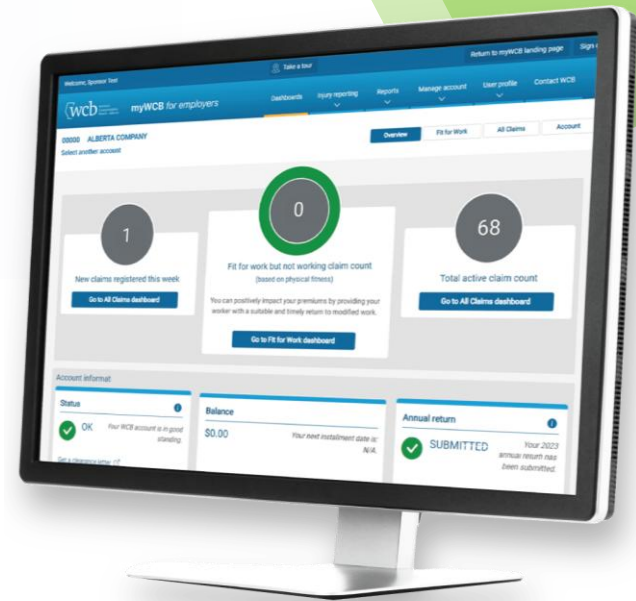


# myWCB employer portal

*Provides more comprehensive claim and return-to-work support for those who manage a larger volume of active claims (e.g., 10 or more).*

With the myWCB employer portal, you can:

- **Report an injury, get a clearance, pay your premiums, adjust your coverage** and more.
- **Receive reminders** when you need to report an injury.
- **Access key claim and account details** to identify where you may need to take action on your account.
- **Gain insights from interactive dashboards**, like opportunities to lower your premiums and help your workers achieve their best return-to-work outcomes.
- **Use the premium simulator tool** to see how your performance impacts the premiums you pay.
- **Compare your performance to industry** with the help of key performance indicators.
- **Access resources** that can help further improve outcomes.
- **Connect with our claim and account experts.**



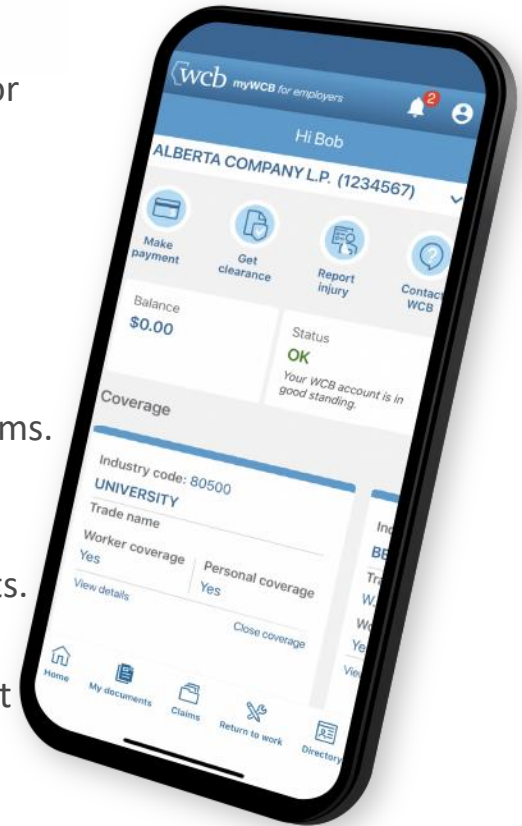
Sign up or log into [myWCB](#) to access the employer portal.

# myWCB employer mobile app

*Designed for employers like you who are always on the move.* Whether you're busy running your small business or regularly away from the office for client meetings, you can easily manage your account from your phone.

The app is a convenient on-the-go tool where you can:

- **Report an injury** from wherever you are.
- **Receive notifications** when one of your workers reports an injury.
- **View physical ability status reports** for workers with active time loss claims.
- **Identify return-to-work opportunities** and create a return-to-work offer letter for your injured worker.
- **Review documents** such as invoices, claim letters, reports and statements.
- **Request real-time clearance letter** and view your account's status.
- **Manage payments**, check your account balance, or change your payment schedule.
- **Adjust your coverage**, revise payroll and update your account details.
- **Connect with WCB** directly.



*Download the app to get started today.  
Available in the App Store and Google Play.*



[Online Services](#)

# WCB Employer Seminars

We offer several free seminars for our account holders:

- Employer Information
- Return to Work
- Action Planning
- Appeals
- **Psychological Injuries in the Workplace\***

Mini-Sessions:

- Training on the Job (TOJ)
- Fit for Work Dashboard

[wcb.ab.ca/resources/for-employers/seminars-and-workshops/](http://wcb.ab.ca/resources/for-employers/seminars-and-workshops/)

# Thank You

Erin Eden, Industry Specialist  
[erin.eden@wcb.ab.ca](mailto:erin.eden@wcb.ab.ca)