

NT/NU Responses for AWCBC Comp. and Benefits Spring Meeting

- **What are the current claim volumes in your jurisdiction?**

2021 – 3072 Claims were registered; 2096 claims were accepted

2020 – 2866 Claims were registered; 1753 claims were accepted

2019 – 3614 Claims were registered; 2424 claims were accepted

Have there been changes in recent years/ what do you attribute this to?

We are seeing a slight increase in claims volume again. To date we are attributing this to industry opening up again.

- **Have there been any recent significant legislation or policy changes? Or any coming up this year?**

Pensions Policies – Capped additional compensation to age 65. This will help come in line with new pensions system to be implemented in the next 3-5 year (currently under legislative review)

VR Policies – Allowing VR to start when claimant is still job attached. This is for early intervention purposes.

- **What are the current challenges your organization is experiencing?**

Nothing new – Staffing/Resourcing and psychological/complex injuries are increasing. These 2 challenges create a number of other challenges including high caseloads, increase in staff burnout, increased claim duration, increased claim costs.

- **Are there any new initiatives your jurisdiction is undertaking?**

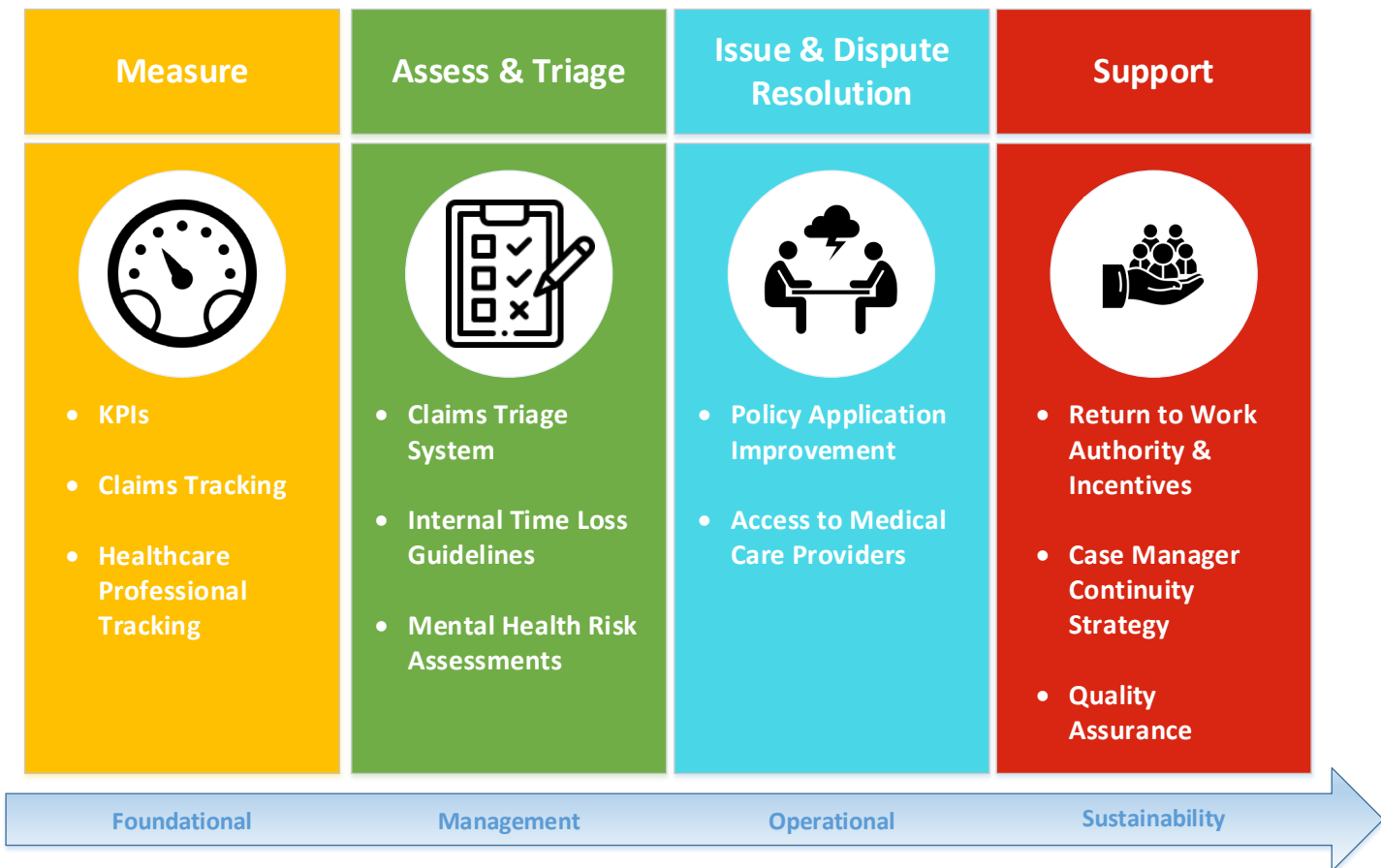
Comprehensive Claim Review

In the autumn of 2020, the WSCC engaged Morneau Shepell to perform an analysis of claims cost growth drivers since 2014. The compensation system has seen a significant growth in the cost of new accidents, particularly in the area of compensation benefits. This growth is relevant to the WSCC because each year the WSCC collects assessments to cover the cost of the system and any growth in benefit costs are ultimately passed to the employer via higher assessment rates. The WSCC's assessment rate includes:

1. Expected New Injury Costs - the full lifetime cost of injuries incurred in the year (current year payments + liability for future payments) including associated claim management expenses
 - The main component of the required rate and reflects WSCC's emerging injury experience

2. Administrative expenses of running the WSCC (unrelated to claims management)
 - Largely driven by the WSCC’s budget
3. Any funding adjustment required to amortize to existing surpluses or deficiencies
 - This is dictated by the WSCC’s funding policy and overall experience on prior accident years

Long term claims, that is, claims which remain active for 180 or more days, were identified as the primary driver for cost increases. This program is designed to improve the end-to-end management of long term claims which largely impact Item #1 noted above. This will be achieved by breaking down our identified initiatives into four pillars of improvement, described below.



RTW Legislation

WSCC does not currently have a legislative requirement for employers to accept RTW accommodations. WSCC is currently reviewing the need for potential legislative change or if we are able to adjust policy to help with employer compliance with RTW.

- **COVID-19 update: volume, claim management, impact on RTW, treatment, other challenges?**

No real issues in the management of covid claims. The vast majority are pay and close. The only issue is the recent volume and high administrative burden associated with the claims when different breakouts occur, mainly in remote work settings (Mine Sites).

- **Psychological injury update: volume, claim management, impact on RTW, treatment, other challenges?**

Our current system does not accurately reflect the amount of psychological injuries we have received/accepted. This is due to our system only capturing the primary injury and not any secondary accepted (or unaccepted) injuries. In a cursory review of our open claims we suspect we are under reporting the total amount of claims which have a psychological component to them by about 30%.

As part of the our claims cost review we are looking at technological changes in our data management system to better capture secondary diagnoses or injuries. We are also looking at the feasibility of sole source contracting with treating psychologists/mental health workers as well as programs who can assist in managing claims with a psychological component to them.

We are also reviewing our conflicting medical opinion policies as well as choice and change in health care provider as we are finding 1 barrier to RTW is the provider having an extended relationship with the claimant without a RTW focus. Some providers have been working with claimants for years without any significant improvement.

- **Working from home: Are you continuing to WFH? What is your jurisdiction's short term/long term plans?**

Staff continue to work from home as needed based on current symptoms however the expectation is that all staff are to have returned to the office. On April 1, 2022 the GNWT has removed the state of emergency therefore releasing a number of the associated restrictions associated with Covid, including mandatory isolation days. WSCC remains to be flexible in allowing staff to work from home if they need to for varying reasons, so long as working from home does not extend into a prolonged duration without explanation as well as performance remains standard.

The GNWT has also released their Remote Work Policy. As WSCC is a unit of the GNWT our staff have the ability to apply for this program. The Remote Work program is intended to be a benefit to GNWT staff and is to be a "no-cost" system for the GNWT, ie. Staff must supply their own desk, chairs, monitors, etc. Below is the basis of the program:

Requirement for Remote Work Agreement

A formal Remote Work Agreement is required for Remote Work over 21 business days. The specific duration of a Remote Work arrangement should be stipulated in the Remote Work Agreement. Temporary informal remote work arrangements for 21 business days or less may be approved by an employee's supervisor; a formal Remote Work Agreement is not necessary. Informal remote work arrangements will be monitored and tracked by the department. If an informal remote work arrangement recurs or needs to be extended beyond 21 days, the employee and supervisor will complete a formal Remote Work Agreement. The duration of an individual Remote Work Agreement shall not exceed two (2) years. Employees working under a Remote Work Agreement may apply for another Remote Work Agreement to begin upon conclusion of their existing agreement, however if the cumulative duration of the Remote Work Agreements is in excess of two (2) years, approval from the Deputy Minister of Finance is required.

Eligibility to Remote Work Inside the Territory

Remote Work will be considered for employees on a case by case basis, and exceptions to the Policy and guidelines may be authorized by the department's Deputy Head, where operational requirements permit. In order to ensure that the number of regional positions do not decrease, employees whose Designated Workplace is outside of GNWT Headquarters are not eligible for a Long Distance Remote Work Agreement where the proposed Remote Work Site is located in Yellowknife. Long-distance remote work arrangements where the proposed Remote Work Site is located in Yellowknife will be considered on a case-by-case basis for periods of 21 business days or less and should be administrated in the same manner and be subject to the same tracking and reporting requirements as other informal remote work arrangements. Approval should be conditional on the presence of exigent circumstances (such as the requirement of medical travel to Yellowknife).

Long-Distance Remote Work

Long-Distance Remote Work may, in some cases, be a viable option that meets both the employee's and the employer's objectives. Long-Distance Remote Work is intended to be an option available for employees wishing to reside in smaller communities while still accessing job openings in Yellowknife. In such cases, the Remote Work Agreement would likely be for a term or indeterminate duration. A Remote Work arrangement is not a substitute for Duty Travel. Employees under a Remote Work Agreement are still eligible for Duty Travel Allowance should their work duties require it. In such circumstances, employees are required to present themselves on their own time and at their own expense to their designated workplace, including travel from their Remote Work Site community. Employees approved for Long-Distance Remote Work Agreements will receive a Northern Living Allowance based upon the community in which they are employed, not the community in which they reside.

Hybrid Remote Work

Hybrid Remote work is intended to be an option for employees to balance the desire to work remotely and the demands of their job, which may require them to regularly work at the Designated Workplace, during specified days of the week.