

AWCBC Comp. & Benefits
Spring 2022 Saskatchewan Workers Compensation Board Update

1. What are the current claim volumes in your jurisdiction? Have there been changes in recent years/ what do you attribute this to?

Claim Volumes: Number of claims registered in 2021 has increased by 8.5 percent compared to 2020. The number of claims registered YTD as of the end of February has increased by 12% compared to the year prior. The 2022 increase is primarily attributed to a spike in COVID-19 claims which we started to experience in December of 2021 and which has only recently in March shown a downward trend.

Year	Registered Claims	Accepted Claims	Disallowed claims	Disallowed Rate
2015	32654	29708	7278	20%
2016	29911	26806	6723	20%
2017	28944	25562	6874	22%
2018	29112	25282	6992	22%
2019	28856	23877	7519	24%
2020	23905	20272	6263	24%
2021	25945	19388	8385	30%

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

- No recent legislative changes, however, a Committee of Review is currently underway, which will include potential legislative and policy changes that we may consider or pursue.
- Effective July 1, 2021 – we updated our “Arising Out of and in the Course of Employment” Policy to include:
 - Recreational activities
 - Brief interludes
 - Employer sanctioned events
 - Teleworking
 - Q&A was added to the procedure
- Effective Nov 1, 2021 – Suspension of Benefits
 - Clarification of:
 - Acceptable or non-acceptable absence
 - Outline specific amount of days allowable for short term absences
 - The intent and application of “up to a four week notice period”
 - Combines “PRO/POL 2008 Suspension of Benefits – Pregnancy” into the updated “Suspension of Benefits POL & PRO 10/2021”
 - Removal of:
 - Retroactive adjustment for suspension when worker qualifies for long term ER
 - Addition of:
 - Q&A format into procedure

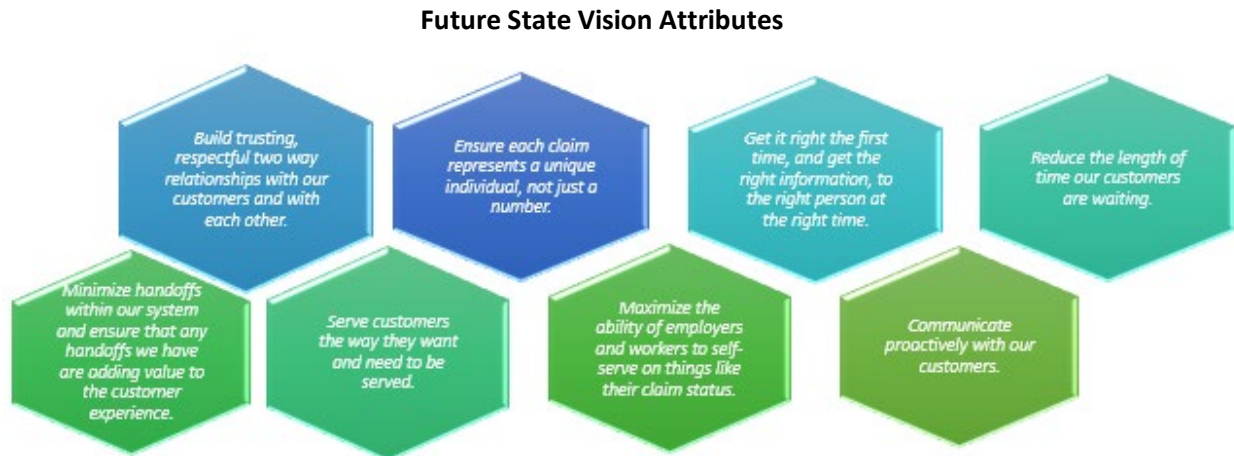
- Effective Jan 1, 2022 changes were made to our “Earnings Verification Policy”
 - Increases to a worker’s actual earning capacity of 9.99% or less will take effect in the current year on the anniversary of the worker’s FEL date.
 - Only actual earning capacity changes of 10% or more will be recalculated back to January 1st of that tax year
 - Changes to a worker’s TD1 status will also be applied on a go forward basis. (i.e. We will use TD1 status from the 2021 Income tax to calculate 2022 payments)

3. What are the current challenges your organization is experiencing?

- Staff turnover and challenges in recruiting and retaining skilled staff. This has put a significant strain on our ability to onboard/train new staff and has compromised our ability to serve and support our customers.
- COVID has created a strain on the organization related to our ability to manage claim volumes in addition to our own staff experiencing an increase in absenteeism.
- We are young in our maturity level as an organization as it relates to change management. We are entering year 2 of a 5-7 year Claim Transformation journey. This has and will continue to result in significant changes to our process, roles, responsibilities and how we manage claims. The resilience of our staff and their openness to change has been a challenge that we are working on improving. This journey will also include the replacement of both our claims and premium administration systems which will create an increased demand on our change management ability as we prepare for that change over the next 2-3 years.

4. Are there any new initiatives your jurisdiction is undertaking?

Claims Transformation



Project Overview - Looking at how we do the work in order to meet our customers’ everchanging needs and transform the way we manage claims at the WCB.

Business Stream 1

Auto Adjudication – July – Nov 2021

- Targeting straight forward claims that don’t require human intervention, will allow us to create capacity for our staff to spend time on those claims that need human intervention and a greater level of support
- Developed decision models and tested proof of concept for auto adjudication

Risk Based Segmentation – July – Nov 2021

- Considered to be a foundational piece, laying the ground work for our claim's transformation
- Segmenting claims on various factors which can include specific risks, length of time loss, industry or injury types
- Getting the right information, to the right person, at the right time, to achieve the right outcomes.
- Minimizing hand offs
- WCB can ensure we are providing the right level of service (resources and interactions) at the right time based on each specific customer unique needs, providing our customers with the appropriate level of support with their recovery and return to work.

Claim Segmentation Pilot – Jan – April 2022

- Health care, back, shoulder and knee injury claims managed by the pilot team for a 10-week pilot
- Utilized adjudication by decision models to mimic auto adjudication. 38% of claims adjudicated by decision models (auto-adjudicated).
- Assessed initial risk factors on claims using risk tool (low, med, high) to direct to the right staff member to provide appropriate support; ongoing management for claims adjudicated by decision model and for manual adjudication and ongoing management
- Focus minimizing hand offs (includes adjudicate and manage by the same person), only handing off when its necessary based on risk level
- Preliminary work aligning to a customer centric work disability prevention model; communication skills, employer communication, and improvement to the recovery and return to work plan

Business Stream 2 – Feb – April 2022

- Workers progress report- determining the value of the form and if required streamlining the document and cadence at which it would be required
- Smartmasters letters- aim to inventory, streamline and standardize templates for consistency and efficiency. Aligning language with Work Disability Prevention. For use in current state as well as in preparation for a new IT solution with customer communication embedded within the system
- Primary Practitioners Initial Report- improvement to form to focus on abilities. Goal of improvement to obtain accurate, better quality and timely information to support initial adjudication as well as recovery and return to work

Upcoming initiatives

- Operationalizing adjudication by decision model (auto-adjudication)
- Structure Visioning Event
- Customer-Centered Work Disability Prevention and Mitigation – Developing our new model of service delivery which includes a shift from a medical management model to a work disability prevention model
- Training and Development initiatives – redesigning how we onboard and train staff. Also enhancing skill sets within existing staff to build the skills necessary to operate within a work disability prevention model

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



WCB Update -
COVID Work Related

The average number of paid compensation days as of March 14, 2022 is 17.9 days.

We have had a small number of long-hauler claims and we have utilized multi-disciplinary assessment programs (COVID specific) to determine recommendations for both treatment and return work planning.

Most of your challenges have been related to managing spikes in COVID claim volumes and changes to our provincial testing requirements, which have impacted worker access to PCR testing and/or professionally administered rapid antigen tests. This has compromised our ability to confirm, as per our Communicable Disease Policy, a positive COVID diagnosis

6. Psychological injury update: volume, claim management, impact on RTW, treatment, other challenges?

Claim Volumes: In 2021 we received an average of 56 psychological injury claims per month, which was a %5 decrease from the previous year. We have seen some further reduction in claim numbers in the first few months of 2022.

Claim Management: Our Psychological Injury Team will be trialing providing Progressive Goal Attainment Program (PGAP) in 2022. PGAP is a 10-week program that enables the injured worker to establish realistic goals and a weekly activity schedule that brings meaning and value back into their lives with a focus on RTW. PGAP will be provided by a WCB Vocational Rehab Specialist (VRS) and will be in conjunction with whatever counselling/treatment program the worker is currently going through.

Impact on RTW: COVID restrictions have lessened which has in turn led to less barriers with arranging RTW plans for our injured workers.

Treatment: We continue to experience an unfortunate delay in accessing psychologists, mental health programs, psychiatrists, etc. WCB is working hard at creating additional capacity but this is an ongoing struggle in Sask. We are also looking at arranging expedited virtual psychiatry consults (we currently do not have an expedited agreement with psychiatrists). Public waitlists in Sask for psychiatry can range anywhere from months to over a year.

Other challenges: WCB receives many harassment, work load and burnout claims. These can be challenging and time- consuming to develop and adjudicate. Also, ideal case load size for a psych-specific case load that adjudicates and manages the claim, is something that we need to better understand and will be a focus for 2022.

7. Working from home: are you continuing to WFH? What is your jurisdiction's short term/long term plans?

We have been piloting a hybrid work from home program over the past 3 months. The hybrid model currently requires staff in WFH suitable positions to work a minimum of 3 days in the office each week. The results of this pilot are currently being analyzed and are being reviewed by a WFH working group to determine effectiveness of the pilot, opportunities for improvement and to propose a longer term WFH program design.