

Prince Edward Island Workers Compensation Board Update November 2021

Psychological Injuries

What are the claim volumes in your jurisdiction? Has there been in significant changes in claim volumes in recent years?

- Psychological claim numbers are very low in PEI in comparison to other jurisdictions but the impact on operations is not insignificant.
- PEI has seen an increase in accepted psychological injury claims in 2021 to date compared to the previous 2 years (2019 to date 8, 2020 to date 7, 2021 to date 12).

Has there been any recent policy or legislation changes concerning coverage?

- No new legislation changes since 2018 (presumptive legislation).
- Harassment regulations enacted in OHS Act in Spring 2021.
- Possible change to definition of traumatic event for non-presumption cases currently being explored to better align with new regulations in OHS Act.

What are the current challenges you are experiencing?

- Access to (quality) health care services remains very challenging.
- Claim outcomes remain poor with many clients transitioning to extended benefits.

Are there any new initiatives that your jurisdiction is undertaking?

- Review of templates to support case management regarding contact frequency and information gathered/focus of communication (for all claims but will apply to psych injury claims also).
- Review of standards for case management (for all claims).
- Contracting with a multi-disciplinary psychological services provider in 2020 significantly reduced adjudication timeframe due to better access to assessment and diagnosis.
- Healthy Workplaces Initiative – this is a cross divisional initiative to collaboratively collate and share information under the banner of Healthy Workplaces. Pillars to the initiative are OHS, Psychological Health and Safety, Work Disability Prevention and HR Supports. The aim of the initiative is to support employers in developing strategies to support overall health of employees which in turn will support better safety and return to work outcomes.

Have you had any success in identifying effective treatment options?

- We have seen little success with psychological claim treatment and outcomes. We have expanded our Health Care Provider policy to include credentialed counsellors in an effort to take pressure off psychologists. We need a psychologist or psychiatrist to assess, diagnose and stabilize but they now have the option to transfer care to a counsellor once stabilization has been achieved.

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COVID-19

What is the volume of claims filed for COVID-19?

- PEI has had only 2 claims filed and both were rejected as testing was negative.

Have there been challenges in the management of existing claims for COVID-19 and how have you managed these challenges?

- Not applicable

Has the pandemic had an impact on overall claim volumes and duration for non-COVID 19 claims? Please elaborate on same.

- Overall claim volumes decreased in 2020 by 21%. Year to date figures for 2021 show complete recovery in claim numbers with a slight increase compared to 2018 and 2018 figures.
- Claim duration was increased in Q1 and Q2 of 2020 but recovered to on par with previous years by the end of 2020. The increase is attributed to availability of health care services and challenges returning clients to work.

What challenges have arisen from the pandemic and how have you addressed these challenges?

- Expectations of staff have changed considerably in relation to flexible work, remote work, productivity and role capacity. This may lead to issues with retention and recruitment.

Working from Home

Are staff continuing to work from home as a result of the pandemic?

- Most staff are working a hybrid model; working remotely approximately 40% and in office 60%. There are variations to that model across the organization based on service need.

What challenges have you experienced with working from home and what measures have been put in place to address these challenges?

- Some staff did not enjoy working from home and we have enabled those who it was not a good fit for, to work in office 100% of the time.
- Difficulties with keeping the workforce engaged.
- Some connectivity issues.
- Communication, particularly team communication has been challenging.
- Expectations of staff have been challenging at times.

Is your jurisdiction considering, (or already implemented), a long term working from home program? If so, please provide details concerning same.

- Remote Work policy in final draft stage.