

WorkSafeNB Report to AWCBC

Date: October 28, 2021

I. Psychological Injuries

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

Claim volumes initially grew and recently have been relatively steady over the past 3 years where the primary Nature of Injury is Traumatic Psychological Injury (TPI)

- 2019, 173 accepted claims
- 2020, 118 accepted claims
- 2021, to date similar to 2020

What are the current challenges you are experiencing?

- Service provider challenges: Delays accessing service providers for treatment (shortage of service providers); delays receiving reports from service providers providing treatment; lack of consistent process for vetting, onboarding & managing providers (whether this be a psychologist in their own clinic or a company providing in-patient trauma related services).
- Early RTW challenges: Lack of understanding/support from some service providers and employers.
- Increasing claim duration over past several years and higher caseloads for staff
- Continuum of Care: Structured case management processes that rely on limited disciplines (i.e. psychologists) to move the claim forward creating a bottleneck effect.
- Staff support/care updates required: It is a priority to ensure staff have necessary skill development to support management of these claims, as well as the necessary organizational support for the staff's own well-being and psychological safety.

Are there any new initiatives that your jurisdiction is undertaking?

- Intake & Adjudication. A process improvement project is in progress focused on improving cycle times, access to assessments, staff training, as it relates to claim adjudication.
- Continuum of Care Improvement Project. Currently in progress focused in the following areas: early treatment intervention and early Case Management intervention for RTW; step-care approach to treatment (right treatment, right time, right provider); expanding our service provider network; enhanced service provider contracts (with accountabilities), vetting and onboarding processes; an educational resource section on our public website for injured workers, employers and service providers.
- Building Psychological safety initiatives, learning and development, and support at the individual and team level integrated into our day to day.

II. COVID-19

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

COVID 19 Volumes	2020	2021*
COVID 19 claims filed (exposure and diagnosis)	35	84
Accepted	27	55
Denied	8	3
Pending	0	26
Other	0	0
Total	35	84

**To date mid October 2021*

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

Long-haul Covid-19 claims are quite complex with limited experience in New Brunswick. Pre-existing conditions may also be aggravated in COVID 19 exposures effecting recovery and prognosis. Coordination with the Family Physician is critical and we have been using Independent Medical Evaluations involving a Respirologists to investigate/inquire on the need for further treatment which also assists the Family Physician and coordinated care for recovery.

What has been your experience in terms of effective treatment programs for COVID-19 claims?

With limited experience in New Brunswick, a referral to a Respirologist to outline an early treatment plan to prevent long term symptoms and “long haul” cases has been effective in some cases.

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

Service provider access continues to be an issue specifically with Mental Health providers. As well, there are varying levels of response time /access from medical specialists depending on our COVID levels. Expanding our service provider network and including virtual treatment platforms has assisted with stabilizing treatment and assessment access.

Mandatory vaccinations were announced on Oct. 5, 2021 that all provincial government employees in the civil service, the education system, the health-care system and Crown corporations, as well as staff in long-term care facilities, schools and licensed early learning and child-care facilities must be fully vaccinated by Nov. 19, 2021. Should a

workers employment, RTW status or access to assessment(s) be effected by their vaccination choice related to the mandate or otherwise, this may have claim implications. We have prepared a guideline and coaching for our case managers to ensure alignment of case management with the mandate and our legislation and policy.

III. Working from Home

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

Yes. approximately 90 % of our staff continue to work remotely.

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

Like so many workplaces around the world, the COVID-19 pandemic has compelled us to reimagine the future of our workplace. Our *Workplace Reimagined* initiative is about embracing change, leveraging technology, and envisioning a different approach to better serving our clients to empower success.

We continue to seek out ways to meet employees' immediate needs through conversations around working from home, in the office, or a flexible combination. Reimagining the workplace is not a "one size fits all" approach, but a custom and agile solution for each employee and to support delivering exceptional programs and services to our clients.

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