

Psychological Injuries

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

- 2019: 115 claims filed
- 2020: 86 claims filed
- 2021: 97 claims filed to date
- Claim volumes have remained stable

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

- March 8, 2018: Mental stress policy was updated to include cumulative traumatic events, as well as removing the inherent risk exclusion so that occupations such as first responders are now covered for injuries caused by work-related traumatic events
- July 1, 2019: Presumptive PTSD legislation was introduced for all workers who experience a work-related traumatic event.

What are the current challenges you are experiencing?

- Long wait lists for psychiatry intervention
- Limited access to proactive and effective trauma focused care with a return to work focus
- Need for employer education and increased understanding of psychological injuries
- Multi-disciplinary approach to treatment and recovery currently unavailable
- Physical injuries with psychological overlay impacting return to work

Are there any new initiatives that your jurisdiction is undertaking?

- Operationalizing the role of the Psychology Consultant to assist case managers in effective medical management of traumatic mental stress injury claims and provide necessary outreach to educate and support collaboration with psychological service providers.
- Reviewing occupational therapy intervention tailored to traumatic mental stress injuries as an important part of the recovery, rehabilitation and workplace re-integration for these claims;
- Reviewing options to establish a multidisciplinary program to assess and treat traumatic mental stress injuries.

Have you had any success in identifying effective treatment options?

- N/A

COVID-19

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

- There have been 17 claims filed for COVID-19 in total since March 2020 with 15 of these claims accepted.

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

- We have had only 2 claims that have had case management intervention, both of which have been challenging due to the unique circumstances of these claims.

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

- This has been a challenge.

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

- Claim volume for new injuries decreased significantly overall from April 2020 to June 2020 (approximately 45%). Current claim volumes for new injuries are approximately 20% lower than pre-pandemic levels
- Duration increased due to limited access to health care services, treatments and diagnostics during the height of the pandemic including physiotherapy, chiropractic treatment, massage therapy, occupational rehabilitation, MRI's, specialist appts, etc. There was also a lack of early and safe return to work opportunities caused by the pandemic which negatively impacted duration.

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

- At the height of the pandemic, some policies, processes and practices could not be applied due to the exceptional circumstances that existed. For example, some workers were unable to continue with early and safe return to work due to COVID related issues; 13-week rate reviews were not completed where wage information could not be obtained from employers; there were delays in implementing decisions regarding suitable employment and earnings, etc. Such factors impacted duration and claims costs.

Working from Home

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

- With the exception of a limited number of staff who are continuing to work from home due to accommodations, the vast majority of staff returned to the office this past summer. However, we are open to the public by appointment only with COVID health and safety protocols in place.

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

- Some paper-based work cannot be completed from home which necessitated having other staff complete this work for those not working in the office.

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

- A long-term work from home program is currently being considered. However, no details are available at this time.