

Q2 – 2022 Update

2021 – 2023 Policy Project Plan



Overview

WCB-Alberta has developed a multi-year plan reflective of feedback from both internal and external stakeholders. Policies are reviewed for a variety of reasons including updating benefits and defining services, but always with the goal of building understanding and clarity for all stakeholders.

Quarterly updates will be used to reflect changes in priorities, keeping the plan current. **In working through the policy plan, we are committed to ensuring our policies reflect current legislation, research, and stakeholder feedback.**

Stakeholder Feedback

As part of the policy planning process, stakeholders were invited to submit their priorities. Several of these priorities are reflected in the plan: reimbursement of housekeeping expenses; medical cannabis; work from home/remote work; and cost relief for psychological treatment unrelated to the work injury/pre-existing psychological conditions. Other suggestions require additional research to determine the scope and nature of the problem. Note that some submissions focused on issues outside the policy process; these are shared with the relevant operating areas.

Items requiring additional research are noted below; they will be evaluated to understand the issue and its impact before we determine the next step in the process. Where possible, similar items are grouped together.

- Cost relief:** Threshold for back injuries
No time loss (NTL) claims
- Industry Custom Pricing**
- Administration of Safety Association Grants**
- Payment of temporary total disability benefits during medical investigation**

2021-23 Policy Reviews

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Policy Reference*</i>
Housekeeping expenses: reimbursement of costs prior to December 1, 2013	Stakeholder consultation was completed in 2021. Status: Revised policy approved and published January 2022.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">04-10, Part II, Application 3

*Current policy documents can be found in the *Policies and Information Manual* <https://www.wcb.ab.ca/about-wcb/policy-manual/>. An overview of the policy development and consultation process can be found on the website: <https://www.wcb.ab.ca/assets/pdfs/public/policy/Policy-development-and-consultation-process.pdf>

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Policy Reference*</i>
Third party recoveries – cost relief – unknown or uninsured third parties	Stakeholder consultation was completed in 2021. Status: Revised policy approved and published January 2022.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 05-02, Part II, Application 1 • 07-02, Part II, Application 6
Cost Relief: Reactions to COVID-19 Compulsory Vaccinations	Building on our support for employers coping with COVID-19, we proposed a provision to provide cost relief for reactions to compulsory COVID-19 vaccinations under Policy 05-02, Part II, Application 2. Stakeholder consultation was completed, and changes were finalized in Q2, including a cross-reference in Policy 03-01, Part II, Application 3. Status: Revised policy approved and published May 2022.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 03-01, Part II, Application 3 • 05-02, Part II, Application 2
Medical Cannabis	As medical cannabis has become more common in primary care, we want to ensure our clients and their treatment providers have clear, evidence-based criteria for accessing coverage through our workers' compensation system. Coverage in the draft policy reflects the most current information available, using medical evidence, legislative obligations, and professional practice guidelines. Status: Stakeholder consultation was completed in early May 2022 (extended from March to allow additional time for stakeholders to respond). The revised policy and addendum are going forward for approval in Q2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 04-06, <i>Health Care</i>, Part II, new application
Funding	A review of Funding policy is underway. Internal and external expert reviews are complete. Status: Online consultation open until June 20, 2022 (extended from April 18 to allow additional time for stakeholders to respond).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 01-01, Part I and Part II
Opioids	Review the policy to ensure it reflects updated knowledge. Status: Review underway. Online stakeholder consultation going forward for approval in Q2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 04-06, Part II, Application 4

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Work from home: remote work in Alberta as well as inter-jurisdictional issues if working in another province	<p>The COVID-19 pandemic has changed patterns of work. More people are working from home and employers are re-examining physical location as a requirement for employment.</p> <p>A policy review will be done to ensure policies reflect the changing environment.</p> <p>Status: Review underway. Discussions with stakeholders will begin in Q3.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 02-01, Part I and Part II
Permanent total disability definition review	<p>Section 43(2) of the <i>Workers' Compensation Act</i> lists several injuries that are presumed to result in permanent total disability.</p> <p>We would like to engage stakeholders in defining parameters for determining additional catastrophic injuries or injury outcomes that result in permanent total disability.</p> <p>Status: Review underway.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 04-04, Part I and Part II
Occupational Hearing Loss	<p>Review the policy to ensure it reflects current knowledge to provide appropriate guidance for the adjudication of hearing loss claims.</p> <p>Status: Review underway.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 03-01, Part II, Application 5
Cost Relief: psychological treatment unrelated to the work injury/pre-existing psychological conditions	<p>Review options for cost relief for psychological treatment unrelated to the work injury/pre-existing psychological conditions. This is part of a broader project to look at various aspects of the cost relief policy.</p> <p>Status: Preliminary review of scope scheduled for Q3.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 03-01, Part II, Application 6 • 05-02, Part II, Application 1
Home modifications for severely injured workers	<p>Severely injured workers are living longer and relocating more. A review of WCB's policy on home modifications is timely to ensure it is meeting the needs of stakeholders.</p> <p>Status: Preliminary review of scope scheduled for Q3.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 04-07, Part II, Application 2

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Annual Updates

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Policy Reference*</i>
Annual updates	Annual update of various benefits to which COLA is applied, including annual compensation tables. Allowance rates, funeral costs, and the clothing allowance for severely injured workers who use assistive devices are completed annually. Status: Planned for Q4, 2022.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All associated policy documents

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