Research Program

Research Project Details	
Title	Enhancing psychological safety in return-to-work: Addressing psychological workplace concerns for sustainable employment
Investigator(s)	Dr. Janessa Griffith and Sydney Penner, Work Wellness Institute
Funding Period	2025-2027
Budget	$66,890.00
Issue/Rationale	Psychological safety is a foundational concept in organizational behavior and occupational health psychology, yet it remains underexplored in the context of return-to-work (RTW) following injury. The study will explicitly examine protective factors and coping strategies among workers who report positive return-to-work experiences, to generate insights not only into barriers but also into what promotes psychological safety and resilience.
Objective(s)	Objectives: • Examine psychological and organizational barriers to successful RTW, including workplace stigma and lack of supervisory support. • Identify protective factors and successful coping mechanisms that contribute to positive RTW outcomes. • Explore how Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) intersect with workplace psychological safety and RTW challenges. • Evaluate how workplace culture, employer accommodations, and supervisor training impact psychological safety during RTW. • Generate practical, evidence-based recommendations and tools for employers, WCB-Alberta, and disability professionals to enhance RTW processes in Alberta.
Anticipated Results/ Impact	The findings will generate actionable recommendations and tools for improving employer and WCB-Alberta practices to enhance psychological safety and reduce barriers to sustainable employment. By identifying both risk and protective factors, the project can help develop more nuanced and inclusive RTW policies and interventions. These insights will benefit multiple stakeholders including injured workers, employers, WCB case managers, and mental health professionals. Ultimately, the research seeks to improve the efficiency, fairness, and psychological equity of Alberta's return-to-work processes.
Keywords	Return-to-work, psychological safety, workplace factors, accommodations, barriers